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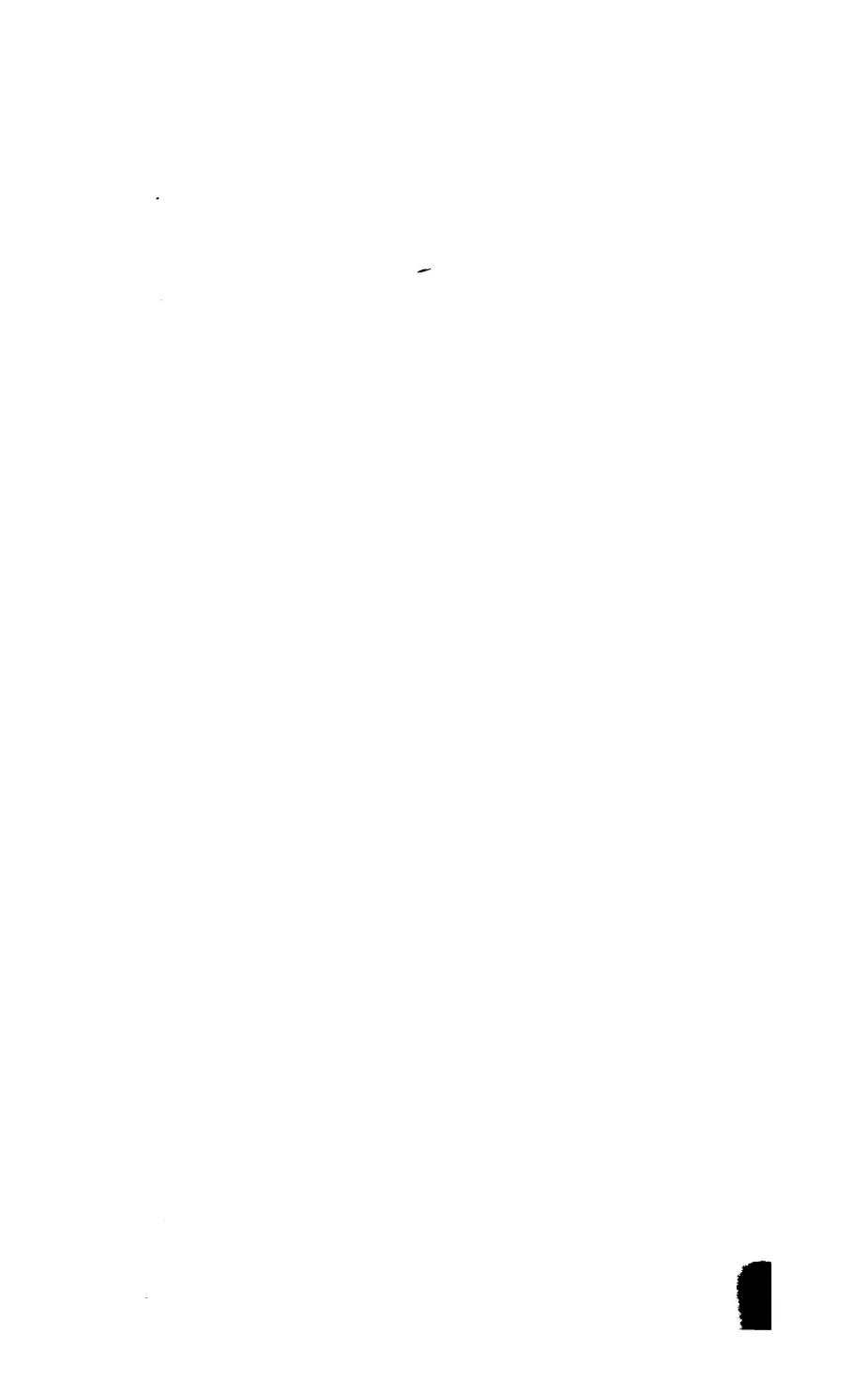
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ASMODEUS AT LARGE.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

"PELHAM," "EUGENE ARAM,"

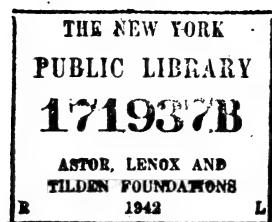
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PREFACE.

As it is possible that with this first part the fiction of "Asmodeus at Large" may terminate, and as it is highly probable, at least, that it will not for some time be continued, we may as well say a few words on the design and object of the work. Although a part of a series, this first Book is a whole in itself;—its moral is complete. The more ingenious reader may, perhaps, already have perceived, that, while adapted to this miscellany* by constant allusions to real and temporary events, a metaphysical meaning runs throughout the characters and the story. In the narrator is imbodyed the SATIETY which is of the world; in Asmodeus is the principle of vague EXCITEMENT in which Satiety always seeks for relief. The extravagant adventures,—the rambling from the ideal to the common-place, from the

* New Monthly Magazine.

flights of the imagination to the trite affairs and petty pleasures of the day—are the natural results of Excitement without an object. A fervid, though hasty, PASSION succeeds at last; and Asmodeus appears no more, because, in Love, all vague excitement is merged in absorbing and earnest emotion. The passion is ill-fated; but in its progress it is attempted to be shown, that, *however* it might have terminated, it *could* not have been productive of happiness. It was begun without prudence, and continued without foresight. The heart, once jaded, rushes even into love, from a principle of despair; and exacting too much from novelty, relapses into its former weariness, when the novelty is no more. No flowers can live long on a soil thoroughly exhausted. The doom of Satiety is to hate self, yet ever to be alone.

ASMODEUS AT LARGE.

CHAPTER I.

A visit to a Quack Doctor—The Mysterious Voice—Asmodeus introduces himself—The reason why the Doctor's lotions were so powerful—The Demon's offer—His liberator's reserve—The Devil's visit—The advantages of a good exterior—Our severities to the shabby—Myself and Asmodeus go to the Play—Remarks on the English Drama—The Garrick Club—Our frankness in sinning—Anecdote of a damned Farce—our Actresses—The difficulty of teaching one of them to be diffident—Braham's improvement—Trip to France—Dialogue on the Reform Bill—On Satirical Poetry—Its decline—Lays for the Lords—Tauroboliad—Tale of Tucuman—The Devil grows metaphysical—Apologize—Apostrophy to Boulogne—The Spirit of Change—Difference of Excitement in England and France—Our moral condition compared to our soil—Paris—The change in its Salons—Chateaubriand and his pamphlet—Ignorance of the English on Foreign Literature—The Rocher de Cancale.

I PUT on my hat and walked at once to the Doctor's house. "Yes," said I, musingly, "I am certainly in a consumption. I may as well, like Colonel Jones, leave my poor remains to the Surgeons at once, and enjoy the newspaper credit of my generosity before I die. The cholera, however,

which is terror to others, is consolation to me. If I were not dying of a consumption, I should certainly die of the cholera; it is something to escape six bottles of *cajeput*, and a lamp of spirits of wine between the sheets, by way of a steam bath. Nevertheless," I resumed, after a pause, and I buttoned up my coat as I spoke, "Nevertheless, consumption is a slow and heavy road out of the world. Short journeys are the pleasantest, and it is the greatest of earthly bores to hear oneself styled for eight months 'the interesting invalid.' I will try then this great operator with a cheerful confidence. If he cannot rub me into health, he will rub me a little sooner into my grave. Next to a long life, what blessing like a quick death!"

With this aphorism I knocked at my quack's door, and was admitted. A visit to a quack is a very pleasurable excitement. There is something piquant in the disdain for prudence with which we deliver ourselves up to that illegitimate sportsman of human lives, who kills us without a qualification. There is a delicious titillation in a large demand upon our credulity; we like to expect miracles in our own proper person, and we go to the quack from exactly the same feelings with which our ancestors went to the wizard. In what age has not the human mind its darling superstition? It so happened, that I was the last visitant that morning to "Nature's Grand Restorer." One after one my predecessors in the waiting-room dropped into the Doctor's study, and out of the Doctor's house, and at last I found

myself alone. While I was indulging in a reverie and a patent chair, I was suddenly aroused by a low clear voice in the room, uttering these words—"We meet them again." I started. The voice seemed feminine. I looked round. No one was present—not even a stray article of woman's dress betrayed that a woman had been there. "It must have been in the street," said I, and resettled myself in the patent chair.

"What!" said the voice again, "will you not speak to me?"

"Who's there?" cried I, beginning to feel frightened, for I thought it was the soul of a quacked woman! I looked round again. I walked through the apartment. I peeped under the sofa. Naught living could I behold; it was indeed *vox et proterea nihil*. "He has rubbed away all but the lady's voice," said I to myself, "but *that* defies him!"

"You seem puzzled," quoth the voice again.

"You say the truth ma'am; yet I question whether I ought to be. A voice without a woman may be a little strange, it is true; but the real wonder would be a woman without a voice!"

"Those jests on the loquacity of the sex," replied my invisible communicant, "have certainly the advantage of novelty. It must be confessed that your wit is very original."

"You have a turn for irony," said I; "no wonder that a gentlewoman so little incommoded by the corporeal, should be inclined to the sprightly."

"You mistake," quoth the airy tongue, "the quality of the person you address. I am no woman,

I assure you, though my voice has, I allow, something feminine in its tones."

"What are you then?"

"A Devil!"

"*C'est la même chose!*" said I, going back to my chair very much disappointed.

"Pooh!" said the voice indignantly, "there is no time to lose! The door will be opened presently; you will be summoned into the Doctor's study, and we may never meet each other again."

"That would be a great hardship indeed," said I, "if you have described yourself truly."

"Pooh!" again cried the voice; there speaks the most damnable of human errors. And so you, poor mortal worms, really suppose that we gentlemen devils intend to admit you into our circle, when you quit your vulgar societies here! No, no—we visit you in this world, but never in the next, just as your great people visit folks in the country whom they never receive in their town-houses."

"You are discourteous, Mr. Devil *de bon ton*; but I think we can make ourselves quite as comfortable without you."

"Bah!" replied the Devil. "You would insinuate that you cannot be tormented without us. Absurd! it is your own passions that torment you; those are our deputies, and while you think in our regions below we are actively torturing you, we are sitting quietly in our drawing-rooms playing at *rouge et noir*, and leave you to torture each other. Envy, jealousy, fear, and repentance—these can play the devil with you very handsomely,

without our assistance. But a truce to explanation. Time presses for decision. Know that I am the Devil Asmodeus, whose adventures with Don Cleofas you know so well. At that time I had the pleasure of making your acquaintance."

"Signor Don Asmodeus," said I, interrupting the Devil, somewhat briskly, "you do me too much honour; I have had cares and crosses enough in life to write old age in my heart; but in mere years, the vulgar computations of time, I am not quite so ancient as you would allege; *sacre diantre!* according to you, I should be about one hundred and ninety-five!"

"Mistake not!" returned the Devil, "at that time you existed in another shape."

"Aha! you are a Pythagorean, then! I hope my old form enjoyed better health than my present one."

"That is a secret," said the Devil, mysteriously; "I cannot tell you who, or what you were. Transmigration is not a thing to be babbled about; those fellows who pretended in ancient times to remember their former selves, were monstrous impostors, I assure you."

"I easily believe it; but granting our old acquaintance, for my memory certainly cannot contradict you; what is it that Signor Don Asmodeus wishes me to do?"

"Mount that chair, and look on the shelf to the right of the fire-place. You will see a bottle of lotion."

"Ah! I see it now; and you are at present within that bottle!"

"Exactly; that d—d Quack in the next room, when he made war against mankind, easily persuaded me to enter into partnership with him; but faith, the rogue decoyed me one bright morning into this bottle of lotion, and there I have been caged ever since."

"What then, it is your presence, I suppose, that gives so strong a power to the lotion?"

"Just so: You have no idea how the water a devil bathes in can blister the skin; it is from this bottle that the Doctor fills his smaller receptacles in the next room."

"You then are the great back-rubber," cried I, in much horror; "you are the hole-maker, and the lady-destroyer! and going to the Doctor is but another phrase for going to the Devil!"

"Do not reproach me now," said the demon, in a melancholy voice, "I suffer myself, I assure you, in this infernal sea of cantharides, as much as the creatures I destroy. Willingly would I be released from my present confinement, and if you have pity either for devil or man, you will take me out of the Doctor's possession. Fortunate, indeed, was it for you that I recognised you as an old acquaintance; to new debutants in this world, I am not suffered to demean myself by an introduction—that is left to demons of lower rank; fortunate, I say, was it for you, or I should have clawed all the skin off your back before you knew what a deuce of a fellow had got hold of you."

"If I release you," said I, musingly, "it will certainly be for the benefit of mankind; but then you know—most philosophical Devil—that there is nothing in the world like an enlarged self-interest, and I want to make the best bargain I can with you also, for myself. Will you be to me the same Cicerone and companion that you were to Don Cleofas? I am subject to fits of fearful despondency—I want an entertaining companion—I am too absent for women, and too gloomy for men; but I think I could be excellent friends with a polite devil."

"All that I was to Don Cleofas, that will I be to you! More than I was to Don Cleofas, I can be to you also; for Don Cleofas was an idle young man, a mere student; just wise enough for a lover. He would have been incapable of understanding half the sights I should have wished to reveal to him; and as to our discourses, they owe all their merit to that wittiest of eaves-droppers—Le Sage; but you, sir, are just the person—nay, never blush, on the honour of a gentleman—you are just the person I could take a pleasure in instructing. The past—the present—this world—a great portion of the other—all that now live—all that have ever lived—I can show you at your command. Nay, if you have the courage, we can take an occasional trip to the moon, or perform the grand tour of the *lactea via*! What a pleasant way of passing this dull winter! Then, too, I have a large acquaintance among the fairies, and I can let you into more secrets in that quarter, than Master

Crofton Croker is well aware of. As to mortals—the highest—the fairest—the wisest—I can make you intimate with them all. You shall shoot with Charles X. at Holyrood—dine with the Duke of Reichstadt, and ask him if he remembers that he is the son of Napoleon. You shall sit on the wool-sack with Brougham, and see me uncork the nonsense of Londonderry. You shall eat your fish at the *Rocher de Cancale*, when you incline to the gourmand; and gaze on the moon from the shattered arches of the *Colosseum*, when you meditate the romantic!”

“Your offers content me,” said I, less enthusiastically than the Devil expected; “I accept them at once: the time indeed has passed since either luxury or romance had the power to charm: but I can still be amused, if no longer delighted. Come, then, shall I put you into my pocket, and carry you and your prison away?”

“No!” returned the Devil, “you must open the window, and throw the phial out upon the stones!”

“And you—”

“Will have the honour to be in waiting for you at your own rooms by the time you arrive there.”

“But, Signor Don Asmodeus, there is no compact between us, you will please to recollect. I shall endorse no bills you may wish to present me, payable in the next world. I shall be happy to make your acquaintance in an honest way, but I cannot afford to lend you my soul.”

“Bah!” said Asmodeus, “those bargains are

obsolete; hell must have been badly peopled at that time; now we have more souls than we know what to do with." Reassured by this information, I opened the window, and threw the lotion on the pavement: I had scarcely done so, before the Doctor's bell rang, and I knew that it was my turn to be rubbed: my ardour for that personal experiment was, however, wonderfully abated; I doubted not but that the doctor had other bottles equally calculated to play the Devil with one. I seized my stick and gloves, brushed by the servant with an unintelligible mutter, and walked home to see if my new acquaintance was a gentleman of his word.

"A stranger, Sir, in the library," said my servant in opening the door.

"Indeed! what, a short lame gentleman?"

"No, sir; middle-sized,—has very much the air of a lawyer or professional man."

I entered the room, and instead of the dwarf demon Le Sage described, I beheld a comely man seated at the table, with a high forehead, a sharp face, and a pair of spectacles on his nose. He was employed in reading the new novel of "The Usurer's Daughter."

"This cannot be the devil!" said I to myself; so I bowed, and asked the gentleman his business.

"Tush!" quoth my visitor; "and how did you leave the Doctor?"

"It is you, then!" said I; "you have grown greatly since you left Don Cleofas."

"Wars fatten our tribe," answered the Devil;

"besides shapes are optional with me, and in England men go by appearances more than they do abroad; one is forced to look respectable and portly: the Devil himself could not cheat your countrymen with a shabby exterior. Doubtless you observe that all the swindlers, whose adventures enliven your journals, are dressed 'in the height of fashion,' and enjoy 'a mild prepossessing demeanour.' Even the Cholera does not menace 'a gentleman of the better ranks;' and no bodies are burked with a decent suit of clothes on their backs. Wealth in all countries is the highest possible morality; but you carry the doctrine to so great an excess, that you scarcely suffer the poor man to exist at all. If he take a walk in the country, there's the Vagrant Act; and if he has not a penny to hire a cellar in town, he's snapped up by a Barker, and sent off to the surgeons in a sack. It must be owned that no country affords such warnings to the spendthrift. You are one great moral against the getting rid of one's money."

On this, Asmodeus and myself had a long conversation; it ended in our dining together, (for I found him a social fellow, and fond of a broil in a quiet way;) and adjourning in excellent spirits, to the theatre.

"Certainly," said the Devil, taking a pinch of snuff, "certainly, your drama is wonderful fine, it is worthy of a civilized nation; formerly you were contented with choosing actors among human kind, but what an improvement to go among the brute creation! think what a fine idea to have a whole

play turn upon the appearance of a broken-backed lion! And so you are going to raise the drama by setting up a club; that's another exquisite notion! You hire a great house in the neighbourhood of the theatre; you call it the Garrick Club. You allow actors and patrons to mix themselves and their negus there after the play; and this you call a design for exalting the drama. Certainly you English are a droll set; your expedients are admirable."

"My good Devil, any thing that brings actors and spectators together, that creates an *esprit de corps* among all who cherish the drama, is not to be sneered at in that inconsiderate manner."

"I sneer! you mistake me; you have adduced a most convincing argument, *esprit de corps*!—good! Your clubs certainly nourish sociality greatly; those little tables, with one sulky man before one sulky chop—those hurried nods between acquaintances—that monopoly of newspapers and easy chairs—all exhibit to perfection the cementing faculties of a club. Then, too, it certainly does an actor inestimable benefit to mix with lords and squires. Nothing more fits a man for his profession, than living with people who knew nothing about it. Only think what a poor actor Kean is; you would have made him quite a different thing, if you had tied him to tame gentlemen in the "Garrick Club." He would have played "Richard" in a much higher vein, I doubt not."

"Well," said I, "the stage is your affair at present, and doubtless you do right to reject any innovation."

"Why, yes," quoth the Devil, looking round; "we have a very good female supply in this quarter. But pray how comes it that the English are so candid in sin? Among all nations there is immorality enough, heaven knows; but you are so delightfully shameless: if a crime is committed here, you can't let it 'waste its sweetness;' you thrust it into your papers forthwith; you stick it upon your walls; you produce it at your theatres; you chat about it as an agreeable subject of conversation; and then you cry out with a blush against the open profligacy abroad! This is one of those amiable contradictions in human nature that charm me excessively. You fill your theatres with ladies of pleasure—you fill your newspapers with naughty accounts—a robbery is better to you than a feast—and a good fraud in the city will make you happy for a week; and all this while you say: '*We* are the people who send vice to Coventry, and teach the world how to despise immorality.' Nay, if one man commits a murder, your newspapers kindly instruct his associates how to murder in future, by a far safer method. A wretch kills a boy for the surgeons, by holding his head under water: 'Silly dog!' cries the Morning Herald, 'why did not he clap a sponge dipped in prussic acid to the boy's mouth?' "

Here we were interrupted by a slight noise in the next box, which a gentleman had just entered. He was a tall man, with a handsome face and very prepossessing manner.

"That is an Author of considerable reputa-

tion," said my Devil, "quiet, though a man of wit, and with a heart, though a man of the world. Talking of the drama, he once brought out a farce, which had the good fortune to be damned. As great expectations had been formed of it, and the author's name had transpired; the unsuccessful writer rose the next morning with a hissing sound in his ears, and that leaning towards misanthropy, which you men always experience when the world has the bad taste to mistake your merits. 'Thank Fate, however,' said the Author, 'it is damned thoroughly—it is off the stage—I cannot be hissed again—in a few days it will be forgotten—meanwhile I will take a walk in the Park.' Scarce had the gentleman got into the street, before, lo! at a butcher's shop blazed the 'very head and front of his offending.' 'Second night of its appearance, the admired Farce of ———, by ———, Esq.' Away posts the Author to the Manager.

'Good heavens, sir! my farce again! was it not thoroughly damned last night?'

'Thoroughly damned!' quoth the Manager, drily; 'we reproduce it, sir—we reproduce it (with a knowing wink,) that the world, enraged at our audacity, may come here to damn it again!' So it is, you see! the love of money is the contempt of man: there's an aphorism for you! Let us turn to the stage. What actresses you have!—certainly you English are a gallant nation; you are wonderfully polite to come and see such horrible female performers! By the by, you observed when

that young lady came on the stage, how timidly she advanced, how frightened she seemed. "What modesty!" cry the audience; "we must encourage her!" they clap, they shout, they pity the poor thing, they cheer her into spirits. Would you believe that the hardest thing the Manager had to do with her was to teach her that modesty. She wanted to walk on the stage like a grenadier, and it required fifteen lessons to make her be ashamed of herself. It is in these things that the stage mimics the world, rather behind the scenes than before!"

"Bless me, how Braham is improved!" cried a man with spectacles, behind me; "he acts now better than he sings!"

"Is it not strange," said Asmodeus, how long the germ of a quality may remain latent in the human mind, and how completely you mortals are the creatures of culture? It was not till his old age that Braham took lessons in acting; some three times a week has he of late wended his way down to the comedian of Chapel-street, to learn energy and counterfeit warmth; and the best of it is, that the spectators will have it that an Actor feels all he acts; as if Human Nature, wicked as it is, could feel Richard the Third every other night. I remember, Mrs. Siddons had a majestic manner of extending her arm as she left the stage. 'What grace!' said the world, with tears in its eyes, 'what dignity! what a wonderful way of extending an arm! you see her whole soul is in the part!' The arm was in reality stretched im-

patiently out for a pinch from the snuff-box that was always in readiness behind the scenes."

It is my misfortune, Reader, to be rapidly bored. I cannot sit out a sermon, much less a play; amusement is the most tedious of human pursuits.

"You are tired of this, surely," said I to the Devil; "let us go!"

"Whither?" said Asmodeus.

"Why, 'tis a starlit night, let us ride over to Paris, and sup, as you promised, at the Rocher de Cancale."

"*Volontiers.*"

Away—away—away—into the broad still heavens, the stars dancing merrily above us, and the mighty heart of the City beating beneath the dusky garment of Night below.

"Let us look down," said Asmodeus; "what a wilderness of houses! shall I uncover the roofs for you, as I did for Don Cleofas; or rather, for it is an easier method, shall I touch your eyes with my salve of penetration, and enable you to see at once through the wall?"

"You might as well do so; it is pleasant to feel the power, though at present I think it superfluous; wherever I look, I can only see rogues and fools, with a stray honest man now and then, who is probably in prison."

Asmodeus touched my eyes with a green salve, which he took out of an ivory box, and all at once, my sight being directed towards a certain palace, I beheld

* * * * *

“And what thought you of the last discussions on the Reform Bill?” quoth the Devil, as we cantered through the clouds to Dover.

“Dull beyond measure. I took my seat under the Gallery—no spirit in the debate—and not one speech save Stanley’s that did justice to the speaker. Macauley served up his old speeches as a hash, uttered some fearful sophisms, for so fine an intellect. The worst of that House is, that a sophism or a common-place is absolutely necessary to produce a splendid effect. Heavens! how they yell on Croker when he is illustrating misstatement; the natural beauty of Truth grows fearfully darkened in that dim oak room. But let us not rush into that *vetitum nefas*—that most hacknied of all subjects. What is there new?”

“Faith,” said Asmodeus, “I ought to ask *you* that! A demon caged in a bottle of lotion is in a pretty plight to learn news, truly! I amused myself with looking over a few new books on your table. I read them as attentively as a reviewer; viz. six volumes in a quarter of an hour. I perceived three satirical poems lying together. Ah, said I, ‘Lays for the Lords’* on the one side of the question, and the ‘Tauroboliad’ on the other.”†

“And the ‘Tale of Tucuman,’‡ more after my own vein than either,” added Asmodeus, “for it hits devilish hard upon both sides. But how

* Effingham Wilson, 1831. † Hatchard, 1831.

‡ Effingham Wilson, 1831.

strangely times have altered in your poetical literature within the last twenty years; formerly, I remember well that no poetry was so successful as the satirical. A pamphlet of strong rhyme, with a liberal use of the mysterious asterisk, ran through half a dozen editions in a week. Now, what on earth are you all so indifferent to as satire, unless it be the satire of the Sunday newspapers? Here, for instance, is the 'Tauroboliad,' a poem of remarkable causticity and polish, and certainly equal in many parts to the 'Pursuits of Literature;' and not a bookseller could be found to publish it but Hatchard, and he, I fear, will not rejoice at his daring. 'The Lays for the Lords' is a tempting title, and the poem is rough and manly enough, one would think, to charm you Radicals into laying out half a crown upon the abuse of the Tories. But I fancy if you had many half crowns to spare, you would be Tories also."

"As for the 'Tale of Tucuman,' said I, properly disregarding the illiberal sarcasm of the Devil, whom I suspect to be a Tory in his heart; "it has been largely and justly lauded by the critics, and evinces what is rare enough in a satirist—a mind that thinks rightly, and goes at once to the depth of things. The author has in him the stuff to make a very valuable writer, and I think he will do your cause harm yet before he dies."

"*My* cause!" said Asmodeus, stopping short, in despite of the strong winds that now almost blew us away in the Straits of Dover. "*My* cause! Ah, you mortals wrong us devils,—upon

my honour, you do: the origin of human evil is ignorance; and who was it that put it into your ancestor's head to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge?"

"Grant me patience!" cried I, "here have I avoided all the world to have a respite from philosophers, and the march of intellect; and I cannot even form an acquaintance with a devil without being plagued with the origin of evil—ignorance and the tree of knowledge. Signor Don Asmodeus, if you are going to be metaphysical——"

"I beg your pardon," interrupted Asmodeus, very humbly, "I was thinking of Holland House."

We got on most famously, as the reader will believe, while Asmodeus and I were thus chatting, now on one thing, now on the other—sometimes of the Emperor of Russia, sometimes of Captain Marryatt's last novel—which, as we were crossing the sea, was the more apropos subject of the two, (and which, by the by, I can recommend to the reader as a capital thing,*)—sometimes of war, sometimes of love, sometimes of the great wonders in the deep beneath us, and sometimes—though the Devil was shy here—of the happy stars, that twinkled their bright eyes so cheerily above. We paused a moment over the town of Boulogne, to recruit ourselves and change our steeds; (for we were mounted on a pair of Mr. Croker's notions of French politics—and they could never go a

* "Newton Forster," Cochrane and Pickersgill:

step farther than Boulogne.) As the Devil looked aslant on that little nest of English imperfections, his heart seemed to swell within him—"Oh, *Sentina Gentium!*" cried he, aloud—"sink of impurities—reservoir, into which, through the mighty drains of the ocean, England pours off the most fetid of her humours; who can look at thy little, turbulent, gambling, black-legged, duelling, swaggering world, without amazement and emotion? Botany Bay of society—living gazette of bankrupts, whether of character, hope, fortune, or health—in whose small page is crowded so voluminous a list! how pleasant it is to look upon thy motley varieties, and to feel that we may, indeed, go farther, but we can never fare worse! Paris is the *Circe* of the world, and Boulogne is her pigsty!"

I smiled at the Devil's panegyric, looking down I beheld a multiplicity of scenes that fully proved its impartiality. There, in the High Town, I saw a fraudulent trader giving a ball from the profits of a bankruptcy; and, in the next house, two captains on half-pay were exchanging shots across a table. In a small garret, in the lower part of the town, sat a squalid family, whom the bankrupt had ruined; the children crying for bread, and the father cursing for brandy, and the mother wishing herself dead. Far by the solitary shore, was a smuggler's vessel, which dark forms were crowding with various goods—here a box of French lace for a duchess; there a chest of human corpses for the surgeons; here, spirits for a wine-merchant, who was a miser: there, indecent prints for his son,

who was a spendthrift. "That vessel," quoth the Devil, "is a type of the town!"

"And of the world, too!" said I. "Let us canter on."

We had mounted on a couple of schemes for Saint Simonizing Paris, which the Devil caught out of the soul of a French waiter, and we were up in the clouds in an instant.

"Damn it!" quoth the Devil, very profanely, "we shall be in the moon presently. When a Frenchman does speculate, he takes good care to do it in right earnest: Earth's lost sight of before you can say Jack Robinson."

"And, pray, my dear Don, what think you of all these schemes that fluctuate throughout France—this visionary lust of change—this non-contentment—this shifting tendency to all excitation—this shot-silk colouring of the public mind, that changes hue in every light that you look at it—does it not portend ultimate benefit to us miserable mortals?"

"Humph!" growled Asmodeus, "I know nothing of the future; but, as a devil of sense, though no prophet, I think it is not so dangerous to the present generation in France as in England. If you don't take care, and settle that stupid Bill of yours very shortly, you will sink at once from the highest commercial nation in the world into a fifth-rate power. A trading people, who are only great artificially, and are prosperous upon credit, cannot long bear an excitement that unsettles commerce, makes debtors pressing, money scarce, tradesmen sore, farmers grumbling, and the desire

for change so habitual, and at last a great change itself so necessary, that moderate change will be but a thimbleful of water on the fire. The soil of your greatness, compared to that of France, is like the soil of your land compared to hers. A war devastates France, ruins her harvests, crushes her vineyards, and in two years afterwards all is as fertile as before—thanks to Nature!—but your light, thin, sandy stratum—one vast hothouse of skilful forcing—if an army passed over it, would take a dozen years to recover—thanks to Art! So is it with your moral condition, equally artificial as your soil. What agitates France now, injures her not to-morrow. What agitates England now, if not speedily removed, will do the evil work of a century. Look to yourselves in time, and if you must have excitement, prefer the agitations of freedom to the fever of discontent.”

“My dear Devil, what a libel on yourself and your brethren to say you can’t speak truth!”

“It is so,” answered Asmodeus; “we speak truth exactly because that is the very way to make mankind run into error. Truth is the true Cassandra—fated never to be believed till too late!”

Away—away—away—with the dull English lord in his *calèche* and four creeping behind us, and the breath of the mail’s panting horses dying on our track—away through that gladsome air which dances over the valleys of France, and mounts into the brain like a glorious wine—away above the lamp-lit towns, with the husband already asleep, and the lover for ever waking—away,

below the gay moon that has just come out, to smile at once upon Joy and Sorrow, Innocence and Crime, the fair stoic of Heaven. We are in PARIS!

"There is a change," said Asmodeus, as we sat perched on the dome of the *Invalids*, "there is a change in Paris since you were last here. Observe how serious the *salons* have become; the campaign of society has lost its sparkle."

I looked into the old remembered houses: Asmodeus said right—people were gambling, and talking, and making love as before, but not with the same gaiety; the dark spirit of change worked vividly beneath the surface of manners; circles were more mixed and motley than they had been; men without the "*De*" mixed familiarly with those who boasted the blood of princes; a tone of insolence seemed substituted for the tone of intrigue; and men appeared resolved rather to command the attainment of their wishes than to wheedle themselves into it.

"Fit subjects!" quoth the Devil, lighting his cigar, "for a king who rides bodkin in an omnibus!"

From these scenes I turned with great interest to one that contrasted them forcibly. Apart—alone, in a quiet chamber, sat a man somewhat stricken in years, with a fine and worn countenance, that spoke genius in every line. He leant his head on his hand; papers and books strewed the table at which he sat, and I noted especially one pamphlet, entitled, "*De la Nouvelle Proposi-*

tion relative au Bannissement de Charles X. et de sa Famille."

"Wonderful power of pen and ink!" said Asmodeus. "Great ruler of human hearts!—talk of the authority of despots—the quill of a goose is the true sceptre. You see there a man who, by the mere charm of his pen, has made himself a fourth estate: a visionary in his youth, a quack in his old age, he is yet the most remarkable being that France can now boast of. But as for you Englishmen, locked up in your own little island, and reading Mr. Hunt's speeches about Preston, you absolutely do not know any thing more about M. de Chateaubriand, and his present influence in France, than that he wrote a pamphlet the other day, which pamphlet has never been even translated in London, and has been read in the original by at most six Londoners. And yet this pamphlet, which you, I fancy, conclude to be the same sort of thing as 'What will the Lords do next?' raised its author at once into a throne of opinion, and made a greater sensation in France than the finest poem of your Byron ever created in England."*

"The more the pity for France. I was in hopes she had passed the time when fine words could set her feelings against her principles."

"You are still mounted on a chimera," said the Devil, sarcastically. "France can always be won

* The writer of the article on Talleyrand considers that great diplomat, we think with great felicity, the "Voltaire" of politics—M. de Chateaubriand is the Rousseau.

by addressing her heart, just the same as eloquence with you must be addressed to the pocket. You speak to the one of her national greatness, to the other of her national debt; but it is unfortunate for you English, that you do not pay more attention to foreign literature and foreign politics. You ought to hear what the rest of the world say of you;—you ought to see how grand, how true the views, which, from a just distance, Frenchmen in particular, form of your present situation. You are like a man who can only talk of himself, and to himself; one great National Soliloquist wrapt in a Monologue!”

With that, Asmodeus threw away the stump of his cigar, and we alighted at the door of the *Rocher*. Small, cheerful chamber, do I see you again, with the large brown sleek cat in the arm-chair! Stir up the fire—make haste with the *Chambertin* and the *Sauté*—where is the playbill, and the *Figaro*? Oh, Asmodeus! in this city I find again the pleasures of youth! Can you restore to me also the health,—the heart to enjoy them?”

CHAPTER II.

The warning of Asmodeus against love—The fate of Authors below—The principles of Criticism and Morality the same—The Excursion renewed—Foudras—Casimer Perier—The art of hatching plots—A view of les amis du peuple—General Dubourg, &c.—A comité doctrinaire—The Duke de Broglie—M. Guizot—M. Thiers, &c.—The Tuileries—The Royal Family—Louis Philippe and his dispositions—Return Londonwards—The Devil's remarks on the Lord Chancellor—Apostrophe to Novelty—Asmodeus re-appears—Chitchat upon Literature—Morals, &c.—Walk out—The Devil's admiration of Buckingham Palace—The Duke of Wellington—Considerations on his probable estimate of mankind—The Devil and myself resolve to go to a Public Dinner—And elsewhere!

AFTER all, there are few pleasanter modes of spending your time than over a bottle of good Chambertin, enjoyed with an agreeable Devil. As we leave the age of five-and-twenty behind us, we begin to like wine and talk. Women and moonlight are still charming,—but they have passed from the drama of life to the interlude. “And what,” said I to Asmodeus,—“what do you propose for the rest of the night? shall we visit Berenger, and make him sing us one of his own songs, or shall we hire a guitar between us and go a-serenading with Messieurs les *Chats*? perhaps your present Don Cleofas may discover a new Seraphina.” “As to that,”—replied Asmo-

deus, as he quaffed the first glass of a new bottle, for those devils are judges of good wine, and their constitutional thirst is a great advantage to them in a place like the Rocher;—"as to that, whenever you wish to turn lover, I am at your service—'tis my vocation—I am the imp of valets and billets-doux, and an intrigue is the breath of my nostrils—but I warn you, I have a little of the Mephistopheles in my nature when it comes to love-making, and my assistance may not turn out so happily as it seems. You see how frank wine makes one."

The Devil said this with great gravity—but I who was bent upon falling in love at the first favourable opportunity, and who, the more I see of life, am the more convinced that falling in love is far better than business, ambition, law or even fighting—for disrobing oneself of ennui—filled my glass gaily—and drinking to the memory of *Le Sage*, cried to the Devil—"A truce with your warnings, Asmodeus—I renounce human friends, because they are always advising and foretelling—plunge me into embarrassments—I will not blame—I will love you for it—I like a difficulty above all things—it is such a pleasure to get out of it. I never knew either despair or regret, and I defy the devil himself to subdue my hearty confidence in my own resources. But drink, Asmodeus—drink to the memory of that incomparable wit, who has left us in the Boy of Santillane, the epic of daily life: how I envy you the honour of having made his acquaintance! By the by—hem!—pray what become of novel-writers in the next world? You see nothing of them, I hope."

"They are punished according to their literary demerits," replied the Devil, "for a bad novel is a serious injury to mankind. Of good writers know we naught—for it is held that a man can do more good by a book than harm by a life, and it is not even asked in the next world whether or not Shakspeare loved *le beau sexe et le bon vin*."

"*Monsieur le Diable, à votre santé.* Your sentiments do the highest honour to your head and heart; and in future I will study the canons of criticism, instead of the laws of morality."

"They are one and the same, properly understood," said the Devil, coolly;—and tossing off his last glass, for no sooner had he begun to moralize, than he made double haste towards the end of the bottle—he rose up, and proposed an Haroun-al-Raschid sort of excursion.

"With all my heart," said I, seizing my hat. So we paid the bill, and sauntered into the street. The Devil began to whistle. "I have summoned," said he, after he had finished an air from *Der Freischutz*,—"I have summoned a couple of notions of travelling from the mind of a German Prince—here they are—and will serve us for horses in our ride about the city. His Highness lately visited you, entered people's houses under a feigned name, and where he was received as the Prince, he lived as the spy. His notions of travelling are particularly useful to us in our excursion, for they are excessively rapid: so much so, that they distance recollection, and play the deuce with exactness. But that's nothing to us, we are not writing travels. *Allons!*" We sprang on our

steeds, and I felt myself instantly seized with the furor of describing. Nay, the more I saw of a house, the more I felt inclined to abuse its inhabitants. But my horse shied so that I was all but over—when it came unawares on a house called, from the English original, ‘The Traveller’s Club.’”

“Look,” said Asmodeus, pointing to me the house of the Home Department; “do you see in that room those two gentlemen, who are very busily reading a despatch. That long-faced, bald man is M. Foudras, the secretary-general of Perier—the very man who was the bosom friend of Decazes and Corbiere: he is the best inventor and discoverer of mock conspiracies that Paris possesses—they are going to give him a patent for it. The other, he on the right hand, is M. Gisquet, the Prefet of Police—an *ex-porteur* of the house of Perier, and *homme de paille* of the present President of the Council. The paper they are reading is a denunciation against *les amis du peuple*, who are divided in several sections, and who assemble secretly in private houses to plot and to discuss political matters. According to the Arguses of M. Gisquet, they are every where, but are never found when the police makes a descent on the suspected rendezvous.”

While Asmodeus was giving me this information, the door opened; a thin, pale man entered. Foudras and Gisquet rose respectfully. “And who is he?” said I.—“That is no less a person than Casimir Perier,” replied Asmodeus. “You see how attentively he is perusing that paper. It is the evening journal, ‘*The Mouvement*.’ Ob-

serve what contortions, and what grimaces he makes: see how he trembles with rage. General Dubourg attacks him personally every evening. Look, now, how fiercely he falls upon the Prefet de Police. Satan! his Prefetship has no sinecure! He has ordered that two new spies should be directed to watch and follow every step of General Dubourg. See, now, they have taken again to the denunciation! The Minister is furious, and has threatened to disgrace M. Foudras if he does not find out the chief rendezvous of the *amis du peuple*. Our gentlemen seem abashed. Perier has exposed to them his painful situation; strong suspicions are entertained that the conspiracy of Notre Dame has been one of his political stratagems; it is also to be apprehended, that before the Justice the persons arrested will prove it to be so.

Perier will throw all the blame on M. Foudras and Gisquet, if he cannot by other means prevent certain disclosures of his conduct. This they will submit to. Hear them—they promise to take upon themselves all the blame in the transaction, should it come to light; but they have demanded a new supply of money to arrange the matter: it is granted. Money is the last thing a good Minister cares about, especially if it's the Nation's."

After this the Prime Minister sat down to write. I begged Asmodeus to inform me upon what subject; the Devil replied that he was inditing a letter to Metternich, and that it related to the affairs of Italy. "Perier will not interfere, should the Austrians go again into the Roman States."—"Is it possible?" replied I.—"Nay, it is necessary!"

retorted Asmodeus; "France has lost the opportunity of commanding respect, and she must now act with forbearance."

"But," continued my guide, "turn yourself this way, and I will show you a meeting of the *amis du peuple*." I obeyed, and saw a great number of young men, assembled in a large room: they were all standing, and a little man, with black hair, and very dark complexion, was haranguing them. "Who is he?" asked I. "That is M. Marrast, the most violent of the *amis du peuple*, and the most constant personal enemy of Louis Philippe and Casimir Perier. That tall man that stands by him is M. Fazy, the Editor of '*La Revolution*;' and the dark and tall fine-looking man, whom you see next to Fazy, is General Dubourg." While Asmodeus was speaking to me, the assembly gradually warmed into great agitation. They seemed exasperated, and gesticulated vehemently:—those foreigners cannot get coolly into a passion, as we do! "And why all that agitation?" said I to Asmodeus. "Why? Because Marrast has ended his speech by advising his comrades not to lose time—to prepare for attacking openly the Government as soon as possible; for if they delay, there is little hope for them."

"And who is that young man now speaking so violently?"

"That is Gallois, the same who was tried for having threatened to murder Louis Philippe, and who was acquitted. That other, next to him, is Guinard, a true Republican, who has more respect for a *chiffonnier* than for Louis Philippe and all

his Ministers. That little fellow with a bald head is Cauchois le Maire, a very liberal writer, and the only independent *redacteur* of 'The Constitutionnel.' ”

“ Now I will show you a *Comité Doctrinaire*. In that drawing-room, you see those stern-looking gentlemen sitting around that sofa which is occupied by three persons? Well, that in the middle is the Duke de Broglie; the one on the right hand is M. Guizot, and that on the left is the President of the Chamber of Deputies. That very little man, now talking, is M. Thiers,—the great champion of the *juste milieu*. Next to him observe that crafty-looking man, that is M. Dupin, the elder, the bosom friend of Louis Philippe, and the best turn-coat of Europe. He who stands by M. Gazot is Montalivet, late Minister of the Home Department, present Minister of Instruction, and who would not object to be *Ministre du Pot de Chamber*, provided he was only a Minister.”—“ But what are they chatting about?” said I, somewhat irreverently.—“ They are consulting,” answered Asmodeus, “ the best means of preventing Odilon Barrot, Mauguin, and Lamarque from overthrowing the present Administration. The Duke has proposed to make them Peers of France, in order to take them from the Chamber of Deputies, and therefore Thiers has put himself into the rage proper to a man who admires *le juste milieu*, and has declared this project dangerous; first, because the proposed Peers would, probably, not accept the honour; and, secondly, because, if they did accept it, it would be an admission on the part of

the present Administration that the Opposition had almost conquered the *juste milieu*. The little orator, you perceive, has succeeded, and all the assembly are of his opinion." At this moment entered Casimir Perier. He was received with great eagerness. Asmodeus told me that he had brought the original of the letter he had just written to Metternich. It was read *en comité*, and all present approved the political principles it contained. I next saw coming in a gentleman, tall and of a yellowish complexion; with a cast in his eye. I inquired who he was, and Asmodeus told me that he was M. Barthe, the Minister of Justice. As soon as he was seated, I remarked that all the members collected around him, and were listening with great attention to what he was saying. "And what is *he* speaking of?" said I.—"Why, he is repeating the examination of the principal persons arrested for the conspiracy of Notre Dame. Have you seen how markedly Guizot and Perier are struck by his narration? Well, the procedure does not promise a favourable result for the present Administration."

We now spurred on our horses, and entered the garden of the Tuileries—dear-remembered garden of assignments and hopes—of meetings, of quarrels, of reconciliations! Never, till youth itself be forgotten, shall I forget thee!

I turned, with a sigh, to contemplate the interior of the Tuileries. I saw that beautiful apartment which had been inhabited by Marie Antoinette, Josephine, Marie Louise, the Duchesse d'Angoulême, and of which the Queen of the

French is *now* the possessor. Here, in the drawing-room which opens on the gardens, the Queen was with her girls, and her two younger sons.—She was reading a pious Italian book, “*La Manna dell’ anima*,” Princess Marie, who is destined to be the wife of all the *new-created kings*, was writing a letter, and Asmodeus told me that it was addressed to General Beilliard, and turned on the projected marriage with King Leopold; Princess Clementine was embroidering, and Princess Louise was making up linen for the poor. The Dukes de Montpensier and D’Aumale were playing at draughts, and both dressed as Gardes Nationales. After this, Asmodeus showed me the former habitation of Madame de Barry, now the residence of the sister of Louis Philippe. She was very busy in casting up accounts, and in making notes for the curtailing the emoluments of those who are employed about the Court. She had in her hands the *bill of M. Paër*, of the last musical concert, and had reduced it almost to half the sum usually given. Ah, if I could but get her for my house-keeper!

“Now,” said Asmodeus to me, “you will see Louis Philippe.” I turned, and beheld a man, with a respectable father-of-a-family look, sitting by a table with a bald-headed gentleman, and poring very attentively over an architectural design.

“The bald-headed gentleman is M. Fontaine, the architect: they are concerting a plan for a Royal Bazaar. His Majesty has a great turn for such projects: in fact, between you and me, his

character has been mistaken; he only looks on the Crown as a great commercial speculation. He has at once the soul and the civility of a tax-gatherer; and if he loses the Throne, give him a patent for building shops on a new plan, with a certain gain, and he will be at once the happiest and most popular man in the kingdom."

By these remarks it was easy to perceive that Asmodeus was no lover of the Citizen King; but who knows whether the satire of the Devil was not the best compliment the Monarch could receive? I settle not these points. I wish to keep well with a Government that could banish one from the *Rocher de Cancale*. And I would fain not share with Lady Morgan the honours of an interdict.

The Devil proceeded to descant on the royal *ménage*, when turning round he perceived me very unequivocally yawning. He had lived too long with the aristocracy not to be well bred, and he immediately proposed to me a change of scene: the wine, however, had made me drowsy, and I proposed a return to London in order to let the newspapers know what was really going on at the Metropolis of Europe. The Devil consented, and telling our steeds to be steady for once in a way, we set off in an easy canter. The Devil fell into a profound silence—it lasted so long that I was surprised at it, despite of my own drowsiness. "What are you thinking of, my friend?" said I. "I was thinking," quoth Asmodeus, "of the Lord Chancellor."—"Better now than later," said I; "he would be delighted if he knew who

was so honouring him.”—“I was thinking,” resumed the Devil, disregarding my remark, “how desirable it would be for France to possess such a man! the misfortune of France is that her men of reflection are not men of action—her men of action are not men of reflection. Had she possessed one who was both, and who, as great a man as Harry Brougham, was also as *profound an actor*, and had he been thrown uppermost as he undoubtedly would, France now would have sprung up from her revolution on the wings of her proper eagle. He would apparently have spurned the *juste milieu*—he would have marched at the head of the *mouvement*. But he would have restrained while he appeared to have encouraged, and won confidence for principles while he was guiding those principles into legitimate channels.”

“Doubtless,” said I, “but Harry Brougham has pretty nearly the same part to play at home!”

“Not at all,” rejoined Asmodeus, quickly; “do you not perceive that in England he is chained by the fetters of his vocation? With all his versatility, Lord Brougham cannot be Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor both. His law reforms, and his law hearings, and his woolsack, and his replies to Lord Dudley give him enough to do. Pity that he was ever a lawyer—he ought to be your Prime Minister at this moment. He, at least, would not have been wavering between six Peers and thirty. The Reform would have been gained ere this, and England——” Here, having had enough of Reform from human lips, I fell fast asleep, and when I woke it was broad noon on

the next day, and I was in my own bed-room in
— Street.

O Novelty! Mother of all our delights—the bright-eyed,—the fresh-breathing,—the seraph-winged!—Morning of the soul—wishes are the birds that hymn thee—hopes are the dews that sparkle beneath thy tread—where thou walkest, all things are eloquent with gladness, and life's air is quaffed as an elixir. What is love without thee?—what ambition?—what social conviviality?—what even solitary aspirings?—the first of any thing how delightful—the repetition how palling! Thee do I hunt with an eager heart through an existence that I feel is not fated to endure long. Come when it will, the last day shall find me prepared, and I will walk with a bold step across that bridge which conducts me at least to a world hitherto untried! in truth, a man must indeed be an adorer of novelty when he rides out in the nights of January with the Devil for a companion!

While I was thus musing and sipping my coffee, Asmodeus entered the room. I greeted him with joy. “And what news?” cried I, throwing down the papers which I had just taken up in despair.

“Why, I find,” said Asmodeus—(“have you any cigars here? ah! thank you, they're all the fashion not only in Regent Street above, but in Pandemonium below, ever since James the First flattered our national pride by attributing the invention of tobacco to us”)—why, I find some one—not you, of course, you have been too busy—has been putting our adventures into a Magazine,

and I have been asking the world what they think of us."

"Ah! that must be interesting," said I, drawing my chair nearer my visiter's, for I dare say the reader has lived long enough to know that any thing about oneself is interesting:—and that is the charm of notoriety.

"Why, they say that my reappearance is not new."

"A discovery, few reappearances are! But what does that signify?—you appear after a new fashion—surely that is novelty enough in the world. We will make the adventures new before we part, and, by the by, you shall introduce me *au plutôt* to the Fairies, since you insinuate they still exist. It will be pleasant to spend one of these frosty nights among the green knolls of the pigmy gentles. The Magazine—what sort of a thing is that?"

"Oh, an old friend with a new face. It proposes to fill up a certain vacuum in English literature, and aims at the design of the Encyclopedists of France, leaving out their infidelity and so forth—to keep up philosophically with the *mouvement*, and to fight the old opinions with the new. It takes a modest name, but has more aims and more intentions than it puts forth."

"May it prosper!" said I, disinterestedly; "doubtless it deserves it: and what else is there stirring in the great Republic of Literature?"

"Marry!" returned the Devil, "you are growing so good that there are very few books now published that a Devil can read. I remember the time when every Novel smacked of the stews—

when a Play was villany made pleasant—and every doctrinal controversy was brimfull of envy, malice, and the inhumanities of hatred. Now all is smooth, civil, and oily. Your Novelists moralize, and your Plays fast on a meagre *double entendre*. As to controversy there's an end of it—except in politics. This growing decency is not peculiar to England—it extends all over Europe. Manners wear petticoats, and are ladylike exceedingly. Yet, you are not a bit better for it—we have just as large a proportion of you below. Why is this? I don't understand it. Nor does your conversation in this respect reflect the modest colours of your literature. Men talk just as naughtily after dinner—Divines and ladies abuse each other just as vehemently as ever. In jesting, the most popular jokes are still the least delicate, and yet the moment you see in a book any thing the least resembling what you are all talking, laughing, chuckling, and hugging yourselves about every day in the week, you set up your backs at it, and call the author all the names you can think of. In fact, all men have two suits of character—the everyday suit and the Sunday suit. And the best of you are much deeper hypocrites than the world is aware of.”

The morning looked fine, and so I proposed a stroll. Asmodeus, who seemed not himself to be always free from ennui, agreed to the proposition with considerable avidity. We had scarce got into the street before we met the Bishop of London. I had some slight acquaintance with his Lordship—he joined us, and the Devil, with great politeness,

offered him his arm. I pass over our conversation, lest the good Bishop should regret his familiarity with my companion. But what can a Bishop expect from a Reformer? "I know not," said the Devil, as we now *tête-à-tête* entered the Green Park, "what I should more observe in you English, than your half-and-halfness. You are so bold and so timid—so lavish and so economical. You order a New Palace slap dash—and just when it's finished, you think it would be better to let it go to ruin. But really you have no grounds for such niggardly conduct in the case of this splendid edifice," and the Devil, putting on his spectacles, peered at the pile of Pimlico which stood majestically before us. "How grand!" ejaculated Asmodeus; "what a noble simplicity!—here are no crowded ornaments, no paltry figures, no overladen imagery—all is simple and striking—then the building is so lofty and so commanding—you may see it all over London. Ah, your architects study the sublime! And what a beautiful idea that round thing at the top—the crown or rather nightcap of the whole; it looks just as if you had first put up the house, and were now going to *put it out*! Doubtless a moral is ingeniously meant—something about Time destroying the noblest edifices. And indeed that would be very emblematic—for I hear the palace was not intended to last.

"All that's bright must fade."

"Tis a pretty idea making ephemera in brick and mortar—poetical!"

"Pooh!" said I, patriotically, for Buckingham

Palace, as the reader well knows, is a sore point with us!—"Pooh! the Palace is a very fine Palace, and Mr. Nash says, it will be quite another thing when it comes to have its gold gates (mosaic gold) put on. But indeed we shall probably let it stay as it is. The nation can't spend any more money upon objects of show."

"That is exactly it," returned the Devil, in his d—d sententious way; "you make a sacrifice to Extravagance, that you may leave it unfinished—a monument of Folly!"

While we were thus conversing, the Duke of Wellington drove by in his carriage.

"Now, quoth the Devil, "I am curious to know what that man thinks of human nature. Between you and me, I suspect that he heartily despises it. One thing he must despise, and that is Popular Opinion. No man ever saw it through so many varieties. Adored to-day, hissed to-morrow—now worshipped with huzzas, now pelted with brickbats—now receiving a magnificent house from the public bounty, and now seeing its windows smashed by the public indignation. Can that man respect those who are all idolaters at one hour, all execrators the next? Impossible! for he must know himself to have been always the same!—the same when hissed, the same when huzzaed! And he has only, therefore, the choice, whether he shall despise in his fellow-subjects the want of consistency, or the want of penetration."

"Signor Don Asmodeus, you talk very well for a Spanish Devil, but you are not profound enough for an Englishman. The people are all

very right—when the man served their cause (or they fancied he did,) they were grateful—when he impeded it, they were indignant. *Voilà*, a very simple way of viewing the case.”

“It is not saying much for mankind, when your best apology for them is insisting on the naturalness of being selfish,” said the Devil.

“Nonsense!” said I. “Tell me one thing—will the Duke of Wellington ever be Prime Minister again?”

“Possibly; in a reformed Parliament.”

“Ha! ha!”

“I’m very serious. Re-action *may* follow Reform—the absurdity is, to suppose that it can precede it.”

“That’s true enough,” said I, and I fell into a reverie; “for my friends are all Whigs!”

“Observe that old gentleman in his green carriage,” quoth the Devil; “he is J——, the wit of a former age. He has become deaf, in order not to hear the dull things of his successors. Poor J——! It is a curious sight, and full of interest, the spectacle of a superannuated jester!—it is like the skeleton of a butterfly! There is one thing that seems strange to me in the nature of wit—it fluctuates. A man, very witty in one age, is thought either very vulgar or very dull in the next: it is because wit depends upon the tone of the times, and thus becomes, in the vein of its *persiflage*, in fashion or out. Poor J——! I remember being behind his elbow some hundred or two years ago, when a tax was laid on hair-

powder and tea. J—— scratched off the following impromptu—it was thought wonderful then:—

‘You tax your powder, and you tax our tea—

We’ll soon have no *beaux* left—not ev’n *bo-hea!*’”

“The wit,” said I, “is certainly not of the most elevated order; and thereupon the Devil and I fell into a long dispute about the nature of wit, in which, *selon la regle*, nothing was omitted—but wit itself.

“What is this?” said I, some little while afterwards, as we were looking over the newspapers at the Athenæum—“‘A Public Dinner,’ to celebrate the memory of Burns and the arrival of the Ettrick Shepherd!—let us go.” The Devil sneered, and we went.

Oh! what a failure! Dinner presumptive at six o’clock, and apparent at a quarter past seven! Then the literary gentlemen present! the flower of England, warmed, from ill-humour to noise; and the row became stunning. It was evidently a Tory trap, none of the Liberals advertised as stewards, Campbell, &c. were present, doubtless they heard the meeting was to be political, and discreetly kept away. Such is the mania of Politics, that even the peaceful ground of Literature is not to be left unpolluted! the high name of Burns, the noblest of Scotland’s reformers, is to be prostituted to the purposes of Anti-reform! and Hogg (whose bold and native genius required more generous treatment) is to be considered, not as the Poet of “Kilmene,” but the incarnation of Blackwood’s Magazine. These devices of party despair make

a freeman sick; they make a Tory traveller exceedingly drunk, *verbum sat!* Great Burns! brave and unhappy spirit! couldst thou have looked down and beheld thy haughty name bowed to such purposes? Out on it!

The Devil saw me in a passion: "Come home," said he, "for to-morrow night I have better sport in store for you. Talking of Burns, puts me in mind of Witches and Tam O'Shanter. I know some most agreeable Witches, to-morrow night is a gala, I will introduce you to them."

"Are you in earnest?—are Witches still extant?"

"In plenty."

"Give me your hand. O Diamond of Devils, you restore me to life!—is it possible that at this day I still have one novelty left me, and that of the feminine sex! Oh! Asmodeus, an *amour* with a Witch will be heaven itself!"

"Are not ordinary women possessed of sufficient witchcraft?" said the Devil.

I was about to reply, when suddenly

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CHAPTER III.

The Reform Bill the only hacknied subject to be considered
 news—Moonlight—Asmodeus and myself on our way to the
 Witches—Beauty of a river by night—Recollections—The
 Devil's account of the Opera and opinion of Mr. Monck Ma-
 son's management—Managers in general—A dreary heath—
 The mystic light—The Devil's description of fire—The im-
 piety of attributing the Cholera to God—The old Abbey de-
 scribed—The Witches' meeting—The disturbance—Peace
 restored—Flirtation with a Witch—Kosem Kesamin—My
 account of the state of things in England.

INCOMPARABLE Cervantes! no one ever ma-
 naged like thee the difficult art of breaking off!—
 witness that marvellous—Pish! Who would
 quote Cervantes, unless, peradventure, he wanted
 to swell up a book with passages which a man
 who has a soul bigger than a sixpence, ought to
 have learnt by heart! Oh! Cervantes, was I think-
 ing of thee when I broke off, with so abrupt a sub-
 limity, in the very midst of the great Burns' Din-
 ner, with the Devil at my elbow!

"Well! and what was the cause of the interrup-
 tion?" My dear sir, that is not worth inquiring
 about; these matters, like King Lear, are "old
 now." Let us talk of something else. Heaven
 knows that, in the three-hundred-and-thirty-three
 third-readings of the Reform Bill that have been,
 and probably will be, before my Lord Grey thinks

fit to make up his own or the King's mind, we shall have old matter enough for discussion—I hate riding a hack subject for ever. Why, what a thing it is to look back upon!—this dawdling Bill, this type and incarnation of the arch serpent Delay! Why, we ought by this time to have laid the axe to the Irish monopolies of sanctity—to have floated our flag over the Taxes on Knowledge—to have cried avaunt to that ghastly leper “the Punishment of Death”—to have——Out on us! here we are, cap in hand, cringing and capering, and muffling the thunders of a Great People's voice, to suit the humours of some half-a-score mushroom noblemen, with bought pedigrees, mortgaged properties, and three-penn'orth of understanding as common stock! Patience, patience! and shuffle the cards—meanwhile I'll go and take a ride with the Devil.

Hurrah! hurrah!—the moon is up and the stars are out, and swift, thin, gray, sweep the clouds above us, like Boroughmongers trying to put out the eternal light with a little vapouring.

“Asmodeus, we are going to see the Witches.”

“Certainly: but how comes it, my friend, that you have any romance left in you? There's the World calls you ambitious; and yet, instead of knitting rope-ladders to Power, you are riding out with me and your imagination to sup with the Witches.”

“All in good time, Master Asmodeus. Youth yet rushes through my veins, especially when on horseback, finding something new, or making

love. There is time enough for a man, who is yet pretty fairly on the right side of thirty (and who has not been idle on the whole) to enjoy himself a little longer, and 'to frolic while 'tis May.' The evil day must come at last. But, Asmodeus, hark you!—the occasion makes the man, and we wait the occasion; it is not yet ripe—the times must bring it; and then he who has aught in him, should wager all he has done for one bold attempt at what he can do. Hurrah! hurrah! how the hedges run off from us, and the prodigal moon showers her jewels over the greedy waters like a rich English Lord on a Goddess of the *Ballet*.—A river by night, with a shagged bank, and the stars at play with the ripple, is the finest thing in the world! Heigho! some (how many!) years ago—it was along such a river as that below us, Asmodeus, that I used to glide my boat to those walls which held the merriest eyes and the rosiest lips that ever gave welcome to a lover! But *revenons à nos moutons!* And what's the news? Have you been to the Theatres since I last saw you, looking *for* snares, and 'at Robert,' your relative.

"No: but I went to a big house the other night, where I heard some wretched sounds. I asked what they were—I was told Music! I saw some over-dressed-looking nobodies. I asked who they were, and was told 'a most fashionable audience!'" I inquired the name of the building, and was told '*the Opera*.' I asked the cause of its being so bad, and was told the cause was 'not of an importance quite proportioned to the effects, and its name was—Monck Mason!'"

“Ha! ha! ha!—that is pithy and true, Don Diavolo.”

“You flatter me. What is the cause of operatic deterioration—this Monck Mason?”

“One of that class of men in England prone to ruin themselves, and call it a speculation. They are styled Managers; they procure patents from Government to forbid sense being allowed at other theatres than their own; and they then deliberately set themselves down to squander away their fortunes upon nonsense! The Managers of the two great English Theatres are the best specimens of this genus of Managerial Monomaniacs.”

“Have you been to this Opera House yourself?” asked Asmodeus, yawning at the very name.

“I!—why you are aware that my hunt is for Novelty, and Heaven knows the Opera now is the last place where to look for any thing new!”

Thus chatting, Asmodeus and myself soon got over the 'ground; and we came at last to a wide and dreary heath. Spreading far, dark, and motionless beyond, as a girdle that surrounded the desolate expanse, was a gloomy chain of fir and larch; and as we now swept rapidly on, the hoarse roar of the sea smote, with its deep tone of majesty and power, upon our ears. Presently, from the extreme quarter of this continuous wood, there shot up a train of pale light, and contrasted the depth of shadow against which it shone. The Devil rubbed his hands—“The jolly girls,” quoth he; “I would we were with them!”

“Does yonder light burn, then, from the place of meeting?”

“Ay,” returned the Devil, in a strange tone; “for know you that FIRE is not that mute and simple element for which ye take it: it is a life, and it is a spirit; and when ye see it rise, and flicker, and dart to-and-fro with a sportful malice, it is not dumb and senseless—your brute agent and minister—but it singeth to its own burning heart and laughs and gibbers at the destruction which it causes. For the Throne and Prince of Fire are within the centre of the Earth, and there the bright King, by little and little, wastes, and gnaws, and widens the space around him. Sometimes in his exultation—for he is the merriest of the Fiends—he clappeth his hands, and moveth restlessly to-and-fro, and sendeth up his blazing pæans in words that gush from the mountain tops, in sparkles of living flame; for the volcanoes are the great vistas to his dwelling-place, and thence he scattereth and dispenseth the seeds, that sown here and there in the heart of the barren stone, or the dry wood whence the proper life has departed, produce his glittering children. But Fire is the Arch-consumer of the world—by Fire shall the world cease; and the Fiend, conscious of his destiny, grows impatient for his crowning banquet; you invoke him as a friend, and he comes laughing to your call—and he sits by your hearth, and obeys your household wants. But like other fiends, he only comes for his prey—you must woo him by continued sacrifices—cease to gorge him, and he flies. Look, when the fuel waxes low, how the disappointed imp grows faint and sickly of aspect—how he retreats along the ruins he has made slow-

ly, slowly, to the last point where he can yet destroy; and how, when that, too, is also blasted, how, with a sudden bound and a ghastly smile he disappeareth—*whither?*—No, man,—no,” continued Asmodeus, after a pause; “no, there is a science in these things around you that mock your vain knowledge, your physics, and your metaphysics, and your see-sawings to-and-fro about mind and matter, and first causes, and—Pish!”

“Pish! indeed, Signor Don Devil—you have been so fine for the last five minutes, that I fancied you were going to let me into some of the deeper secrets of Hades; and really they would be well worthy the trouble of learning, especially as I never intend to be an eye-witness of their accuracy. Do you know, Asmodeus, that nothing pleases me so much as those old stories, in which the Devil, your great master, comes to bargain with a gentleman or lady, and gets cheated in the attempt; for instance, in the tale of ‘The Smith of Avoca.’ Any truth in these legends; eh?”

“By the horse-shoe, yes! The Devil is often cheated, when men take some little trouble to do it. It is the lazy alone that he effectually secures.”

Asmodeus paused; and presently, as if thinking of something else, broke into his usual low, short laugh.

“And what now, Asmodeus?—are you making epigrams for the ‘Figaro?’”

“No! I was thinking how nicely my master got off in the matter of the Cholera.”

“What do you mean?”

"And who," said I, within my breath, "is that dread old man?"

"Why, I thought you Christians believed that there were two principles—that of Good, which is God—that of Evil, which is the Devil. For light—and air—for love—for peace—for all that is happy here—and more than happy hereafter, you are to thank God; and war, and crime, and misery,—sin upon earth, and punishment in hell—*these* are the Devil's doings. Well, a fearful pestilence enters your country, and you insist upon attributing this blessing to the Almighty!—the Giver of all Good makes you a present of a most agonizing epidemic, and you fall into a great rage with the impiety of those who venture to hint that the Benevolent One ought not to be accused of so cruel a gift! You appoint a day for solemnly assuring God that the disease came immediately from his mercy—and you attribute to him that evil which, according to your religion, properly emanates from the Devil! The Devil is infinitely obliged to you!"

"Ay, we are often called upon to exclaim, Is this the 19th century? Now, I venture to predict, that many shallow-skulled persons hearing of our adventures, will suppose them incredible—as if a ride with yourself, and a supper with Witches were half so monstrous an outrage on common sense as the fearful exhibitions of Mr. Spencer Perceval, and the appointing a General Fast for a disease for which good living is the best preventive. Thank Heaven, however, the miserable superstition was not general! There was

a time when the people were fooled, and the Government foolers—but that time is gone. The people now ask for cheap bread, and their Rulers appoint a day for a General Fast—which are the wisest? But a truce with these subjects, we near the spot of our destination.”

By the cliffs of the West of England are the ruins of a certain old Abbey, which no lover of the Picturesque willingly leaves unvisited. And proud, in its melancholy grandeur, looked those ruins now, as borne on the vast wings which Asmodeus had conjured to our aid, we sailed above the woods towards them. Part was hid, not only by the luxuriant lichens and moss that clung to the gray stones, but also by many a tree that drooped mournfully over the fallen columns and the shattered arch. But through one high and oriel window, the moon shone with a deep and settled ray; and below, the midnight ocean broke into unnumbered sparkles of living light. You might see the yellow sands, far and wide, curving around the cliffs; but, save these ruins, there was not house or cottage within the horizon. A little to the left of the abbey lies an old churchyard, with the bones of some score of monks—merry dogs in their days!—rotting below. So the dead seemed our only welcomers. But not so; for now, as I turned to another part of the abbey, where the main tower yet stood, I beheld, brightly cresting that tower, and issuing from a long, low casement, half hid by the rank foliage, that pale and mystic light that we had seen afar. And now, too, out broke a chorus of laughter—and, just as it

ceased, a sweet, soft voice, commenced a song, in some language unfamiliar to me, but which the Devil—wiping his eyes, and declaring it was very affecting, for it came from his native land, assured me was the purest Scotch.

The song ceased; and music of a thousand sorts followed. “I can bear it no longer,” cried Asmodeus; and he went bang through the window, and I after him.

“Ho! ho! what alarms you? Stay!—Kusem Kesamim—all hail! Stay, ladies, can you not?—what a pother! Frightened at an old friend?—it is only Asmodeus. And look you, ladies, he hath brought you a man, a young man—at once courageous and discreet—for a visiter.”

While Asmodeus was thus speaking, I had seized the hand of a most buxom-looking Witch of about thirty-five, very well shaped, but clad in the dress of Queen Anne’s time; and while I endeavoured to reassure her fears, I stole a glance round the chamber and its scattered circle.

It was a low, oblong apartment; from some vast pine logs in the hearth broke the light I have before described, serving the party at once for warmth and lustre. In the centre of the room was a table, covered with provisions of a most goodly aspect; neither were wines wanting, for Witches are not a bit less careful of themselves than any other ladies of respectability. There might be around this table some eighteen women assembled, of all ages, from twenty to—eternity, for aught I could tell, from their seeming; for some three or four, to use Wordsworth’s phrase,

looked "immeasurably old." Centuries seemed buried in their furrowed brows, and glassy, but most meaning eyes. These were dressed in no garb, and after no fashion, of which any history or legend, that I know of, gives a distinct description. It was fold after fold a serge-like drapery, in colour, either black, or the coldest white—and falling down without outline or intelligible shape, like some dream-like and undefined shadow. Each of these elder women wore on her breast a crescent of burning red; it seemed as if the stones were of a fixed fire—this was their only ornament.

These women, I noted, were not the least disturbed at our approach; they remained in their former postures, turning only their passionless and unutterable aspect towards us, and each signing a grave and silent welcome to Asmodeus. But the younger ones, who, perhaps, were so inexperienced that they had never seen a Devil before—all uttering the prettiest shrieks imaginable, started from their places, and half-flying, half-arrested by Asmodeus's address, made a *tableau* that would cut the Rent Day off with a sixpence, if some generous manager could but bribe Asmodeus or myself to imbody it. But my chief object—as I know that in all female societies the value of gentlemen, like that of strawberries at Christmas, is in proportion to their scarceness, in taking a *coup-d'œil* of the room, was to ascertain if any young wizards were of the party. At first I detected nothing male whatsoever except the new comers, till my eye fell suddenly on a figure that sat at the

head of the table, enveloped in a mass of shade, from which even the bright steady light of the hearth shrank as if either in loathing or in dismay. Whether male or female, human or preter-human, I knew not at that moment, till, as it rose, I could, through the dense thickness of air that encircled the figure, behold the shape and outline of a man. "Kosem Kesamim," quoth Asmodeus, turning very respectfully to this figure, as he now saw general order about to be returned, "all hail! a young aspirant after the dim, the shadowy, the afar, comes with me to visit thee and thy servants on this their appointed meeting.—Judge him not wholly, O Kosem, by the company he keeps,—for I am a great deal too good for him."

The witches, the young ones, I mean, laughed; and as I could not altogether gainsay the Devil, I pretended not to hear him, and went on complimenting the buxom Witch, whom I guessed to be a widow.

"All are welcome to me, for in all there is knowledge!" said a deep, a sad, a melodious voice, that thrilled through my bones, like a voice of some dead prophet whom a Hebrew might have convoked to prophesy of misfortunes. The figure resumed its seat, and this was the signal for the general return.

"My dear Mecassephahs, or, rather, Mecassephim," said Asmodeus, addressing the ladies, (for that word, as I afterwards learnt, is the proper appellation of Witches,) I am most delighted once more to see you. Azna, my darling, a glass of

wine. Bosniah, shall I help you from this dish? the truffles look excellent. Pray, Jesthah, take care of my young friend."

To it now we all went, and I assure you I never saw a more excellent supper—those Witches know what's what, my dear Lord Guloseten, better than any ladies I've seen for a long time. What a mistake to suppose they eat newts and murdered men's fingers!—vulgar prejudices altogether—just as philosophers are supposed to live upon water-cresses, as if knowledge, whether in witch or philosopher, did not mean us to find the best sources of enjoyment. Oh, the chatter, the clatter, the talk, the laughter, the hob-a-nobbing of glasses, the ringing of plates, (best *Sêtre*, I give you my word, for I looked at the mark)—we grew as intimate as if we were a set of old wits at Madame du Defand's;—always excepting the elderly ladies I have before respectfully touched upon, and Kosem Kesamim at the head of the table. These ate not, drank not, spake not; they resembled the ghastly images introduced by the Egyptians at their feasts; and like them, too, did not prevent the feast from being as jovial as if they were only the figures set on a plateau. I made great progress in the good graces of Mrs. Jesthah; she was an Englishwoman as it happened, for most of those present were those of other countries, and could only converse with me by the eyes.

"Do you come from London?" said Jesthah, smiling very graciously.

"From London," I repeated; "is it long since your Ladyship has been there?"

"Ah, you have discovered my rank then?"

"Pardon me—I only guessed it."

"Humph! ay, it is some one hundred and twenty years since I was in Town—is it still a very gay place? Drums every night? Do ladies still patch according to their politics? And, oh! the dear play-house! Who is the rage now? What handsome actor? What young dramatic author? Still, I suppose, you have produced nothing equal to Mr. Addison's Cato—and, of course, it is regularly played twice a week; but, bless me!—Ah, forgive me are you of the—of the—pardon me—the—the—Great World? the men *à-la-mode*?—you wear no wig, and I don't see a bit of gold lace about you."

"Madam, my pedigree is sufficiently long, and my income sufficiently easy, to make me ordinarily styled a gentleman. Other qualities to earn that title are not considered, in my time, to be more than elegant superfluities. But swords are worn only by the clerks of the Parliament Houses; and as for gold, we are a great deal too scarce in that metal to waste it upon the outside of our clothes. And you really have not been in Town since the reign of Queen Anne—do you live in this Abbey? not a pleasant winter's residence, I should think."

"*O Ciel!* no," cried the Lady, fanning herself coquetishly, "I should die of the vapours. I—But hold!—you are not yet privileged to know of my residence: some time or other, if you conduct yourself decently, you may have leave to visit me."

"I live in hope; but—a glass of Champagne? So, so, forgive me! are you really a Witch? I own the

fascination; but you don't look like the Witches one sees on the stage."

"Nevertheless," returned Jesthah, laughing, as she helped herself to some lobster salad, "I am a very good Witch, and can sail over the sea in a walnut-shell as well as any old woman that ever was burned."

"Pray, madam," said I, after expressing my surprise at this boast, "are these all the Witches now extant? if so, which are the three ladies who figure in Macbeth?"

"Oh, dead! dead!" returned Jesthah, lifting up her hands, "they died of rage at reading the frights William Shakspeare has made of them. Between you and me, (here my comrade sank her voice into a whisper,) they were exceedingly vain old creatures; and the scandal is, (great emphasis on the last monosyllable,) that they all pulled caps for Macbeth."

Here the mirth round Asmodeus became quite obstreperous, and I took advantage of the general uproar to ask Jesthah, *sotto voce*, if the dark figure that had welcomed me—was the Prince of Evil?

"Hist, no!" returned she, in the same key; "he is human, like yourself; he is the most powerful wizard that ever existed, and none know the hour of his birth, or the country in which he was born."

I looked wistfully towards the figure, but the darkness that settled round it, when in repose, baffled my keenest gaze.

And now the supper was done—now the glasses circulated more rapidly—now the clamour thickened—now I and my Witch were making serious

love—when once more rose the unearthly voice of Kosem Kesamim, and silence fell round us, chill and hushed, like a sudden snow. "Stranger," it said, "there are signs and types of a change in the world—are they so understood—so construed by the herd? Speak! I know all that is at work; but what you, as spectator of the workings, or it may be as one of the million agents that conscious or unknowing of the ministry, minister to a solemn end—what *you* feel, and believe, and prophesy of events—that—solicitous of learning what passes in the hearts of men—that would I learn.—Speak!"

"O Kosem Kesamim, (pardon me if I pronounce not your name after the true witchly fashion,) O Kosem Kesamim, I come only from that hive of London, in which I have been a bee of very industrious habits; but as far as I have had time for observation, I should say that at this moment the great business of the swarm is a quarrel between the bees and the drones. Certainly, O Kosem, to drop metaphor, and speak plainly, certainly, however, there is much in the aspect of present things to amuse, to surprise, and to appal the human and unwizarded beholder. In the first place, I see a vast number of gay, well-dressed, fine looking persons going about to balls and soirées, as if they were living in the most peaceful times imaginable; nevertheless, even among *them* you may notice changes and heraldries of change; their amusements want the *system* which once pervaded them; they seem more broken and desultory, as if taken by snatches, rather than uninterruptedly pursued. The Opera is wretched; balls are *fade* and dull;

Lady Patronesses are becoming like other women; and respect for Almack's is prodigiously shaken; the dynasty of Dandies is fast expiring; and, in a word, the idle ones of the Silken Circle begin to feel that a time is ripening when the staple of life will not be amusement for the few and famine for the many. If the heaving of the elements in social arrangements be visible among the higher grades, it is nothing to the vast spirit that moves slowly through the heart of the multitude. Human ingenuity exercised on one point grows sharpened on others; there is not so much difference as the world would suppose between the mechanism of a steam-engine and the mechanism of a Government; in either, complicated and cumbrous are the first steps to knowledge—to progress is to simplify. Thus, among the working men of our great cities, questions of deep and mighty import, which hitherto have been reserved for philosophers to discuss, are sternly and solemnly debated: the true foundations of society—the origin of ranks—the distribution of property—the two great interrogatories, *what is Virtue, and what is Government?*—these are the subject-matter of men thoughtful at the loom. And while the upper grades avoid such matters as dull—despise them as theoretic—and damn them as dangerous; the time and the hour are at hand when to those questions—answers will be demanded. In fact, (it is in vain to disguise it) *social* Reform must close the vista of legislative Reforms; and if, O Kosem Kessamim! I could but live to a quarter of the age of this fair lady beside me (she *owns* to a hundred

and twenty,) I should live to see things that would petrify my little Lord John on the Treasury Bench, and take all the starch from the neck of the handsome Sir Jamie. As for the middle orders, I am apt to think we attribute a vast deal too much to their influence in times of danger. In times of quiet they are all in all; they form the solidity—the gravamen of the social order. In times of peril they shut up their houses and remain neutral; they are timid and wavering; they don't like to disoblige their customers; they are afraid of a run on the Banks; the row in the streets is no business of theirs; they hope matters will soon be amicably adjusted; and retire to read the newspapers in the back parlour. But this is the case rather in the Metropolis than in the other towns, where the middle orders have a more complete admixture with the lower, and where the system of credit has not made them so dependant on quiet times and the aristocracy! While, O Kosem, I thus rapidly run over the state of feeling amongst us, I must not forget some curious detached pictures: There is a Minister, who, with the greatest courage in the world, made up his mind to endure the hatred of half his order, and who can't make up his mind to preserve the whole—who made up his mind to risk place, power, and honour, who can't make up his mind to ensure them—who made up his mind to the excitement, the agitation, the ferment of all England, who can't make up his mind to the security—who made up his mind to peril, who can't make up his mind to triumph—who made up his mind to all the toil, obloquy, difficulty,

uproar of a great enterprise, and who stands shivering with horror at the thought of achieving its reward. We have an august assembly worthy of this notable irresolution in the Premier, and who, not the least dismayed at the prospect of the House of Lords being swept away, are aghast at the thought of its being increased. We have, yet stranger than this spectacle, a House of Commons faithful to the people, and triumphantly asserting its own corruption. We have, too, in that House of Commons, in the nineteenth century, an inspired and pensioned prophet, who bullies six hundred and odd sensible men into appointing a Fast-day against their understandings, and who thinks God is excessively angry with us for trying to terminate a system of perjury and an organization of fraud; and above all, we have a set of fanatics who think that the prophet ought not to be sent to Bedlam! We have a conservative party, which talks of putting Sir Henry Hardinge at the head of an army, and would ensure a general peace by means of a universal convulsion. O Kosem Kesamim, from these hints you may gather that while Wisdom is at work within the depths of society, Folly still floats, shaking her bells, upon the surface, and that, as in former ages of the world, the doubt, the anger, the petulance the ineptitude of the minions of Accident are more conspicuous, than the steady and unregarded dictates of Wisdom, and the prejudices of a handful of men more consulted than the welfare of millions.

CHAPTER IV.

Unexpected Hospitality—A change of scene—The Cell—The Wonders of the Inner World—A Voyage of Discovery beyond the North Pole—Conversation with Kosem Kesamim—The Ear of the Earth, and Him, that sitteth by it—The Nameless—The City of Cyprolis—The buried of Forty Centuries—Dressing-room of a dandy four thousand years back—Breakfast, and Asmodeus instead of a Newspaper—Mrs. Trollope's America—Constitutional, and mental Vulgarity—Goethe—The effect produced by Wilhelm Meister—The House of Lords and the Bill—The Waverers—The suddenness of the new light to Lords Harrowby and Wharncliffe—The Bill seen with different eyes—Duke of Wellington's Protest—Horror of the Lords at being supposed capable of writing—Lord Durham's accusation against the "pamphleteering slang" of the Bishop of Exeter—The Duke of Newcastle's new work—The Cholera falsely accused—A late melancholy event—moralized on—Men like Perches—General Remarks—The Breakfast concluded.

WHEN I had finished my narration of our doings in England, Kosem Kesamim said in a melancholy voice:—

"Thou speakest, O man! of the more vulgar concerns of life, which thy race have so falsely deemed the more important. Thou tellest us of the vain policy of states; thou speakest of the outward signs of change; but of the Deep River of Events that floweth within, dark and hidden, thou art silent, save by hints, or it may be a chance approach. Yet he that liveth only with the world,

thinketh with the world also. Thou wilt be wiser when thou hast sojourned with us some time."

"Some time!" echoed I, smitten with alarm; "your Highness is exceedingly obliging; but I am not provided even with a change of clothes, and business of vast importance summons me to town. Nay, I fear it is already time to depart."

"Not so," answered the mysterious Amphitryon; "has not Asmodeus explained to thee our customs:—he who visits our court may not leave it for one calendar month. What, ho! music!"

And straightway, as if to cut off my reply, there arose, about, around, beneath, the most melodious sounds, so that I could almost have fancied myself at the Opera, as it was in the good old days, ere Mr. Monck Mason promised it should be better;—had not indignation and surprise cut short my disposition to be delighted, and, shaking my hand at Asmodeus, I told him across the table, that I considered he had deceived me.

"Peace!" said Jesthah reproachfully, "am I, then, so disagreeable to thee! Canst thou not stay with me one little month?"

Fearful visions shot across me; I thought of Burgher's Leonora, of ghost-loves, and bed-chambers on the ground floor. I looked very wistfully in Jesthah's face, but I saw nothing of the spectre in its fair, round, smiling proportions, and accordingly I answered, with a deep sigh:—

"Ah! madam, a month in London would be a moment by your side; but, shall I confess? a prospect of staying in this Abbey a little freezes my ardour, I am very subject to colds and——"

"You mistake," interrupted Jesthah: "you will not have to stay in this Abbey; we shall transport you to the most delicious residence."

Alas! thought I, I am fairly in for it; I know what these promises mean; I have not read German for nothing; I am certainly a lost man. "And this residence is, e-hem! doubtless very well known to my friend the Devil!"

"Nay, he has no power to enter it, unless by special permission."

"Madam!" I exclaimed with enthusiasm, "I am quite at your service then."

Here the music slowly ceased, and a soft stupor suddenly grew over my eyes, a drowsiness like that produced by some great preacher seized me, and even with Jesthah's hand in mine, I fell into a most profound slumber.

When I woke, I found myself alone in a sort of cell formed of the most brilliant spars. A vast, but continuous and steady noise, as of the march of a mighty sea, sounded in my ears, a voice of inexpressible power, depth, and intenseness. I was awed, but not startled. I rose gradually from the rude couch on which I was lying, and gazed round. Through an aperture in my cell, I caught the perspective of gigantic arches and mighty columns of some rough and gloomy substance which I did not recognise as familiar. A vague, silent alarm seized me. I rose, and cautiously quitting my cave, looked forth on the scene without. Wonderful! far as I could see, stupendous halls, arches whose height soared aloft into dim and impenetrable shadow, courts opening one into the other, thou-

sands and tens of thousands, with areas in which cities might have stood, stretched in solemn and deep solitude around me. Every where gloomed the majesty of immeasurable space: it seemed the sepulchre of some giant world. And now, as my steps involuntarily glided on, millions of rills, and waterfalls broke down the dark sides of the mighty walls around me: this seemed to account for the sound that had so appalled me. There was no heaven above this vast domain. My eye penetrated far, far as the eagle might soar, but still rose the rocks and walls around me, shadow their only roof and canopy. This new world, for such it seemed to me, was lighted by strange, unsteady fires, that flashed, danced, and crept around the pillars and crags at close intervals; and these playing against the waters that rolled or glided down the steeps, gave forth a changeful, but ruby-like and universal glow.

“Is this enchantment?” said I, inly, “or is it the Dread World of Death?”

The ground beneath me was rough and uneven, and looking down I beheld large fragments of gold and silver ore. Was it possible that I was in some mighty mine as yet undiscovered by human avarice? While I asked myself this question, from a dim, sulphureous cave, at a little distance beyond, over which a dull smoke simmered, as it were, there suddenly burst forth a column of dazzling fire, and soared rapidly aloft, like some wonderful fountain of flame, higher and higher, till it illumined the whole gigantic space around; and looking up, I beheld it disappear through another

dark aperture in an opposite wall. But still the cavern continued to pour forth, pile after pile of this deep, and it almost seemed, solid flame, and still pile after pile wound regularly through the aperture above, emerging and vanishing like the defiles of a demon army.

"Thus *Ætna* is supplied," said a voice at my side. I turned hastily, and beheld the dark figure of *Kosem Kesamim*, all unrelieved by the lurid glow that played on all else—dull, shadowy, and indistinct, as if seen at a distance by the uncertain twilight; yet was he within touch of my hand, and the red light of unnumbered fires burnt fiercely round him.

"Fear not," said that mournful and solemn voice, "knowest thou on what spot we stand?"

"Great Enchanter, no!"

"It is a spot where fear should be unknown, though awe may wake; for here crime and war, and man's guilty deeds, have come not since eternity. This is the Centre of the Earth. Behold the womb of the round world! Is it not a goodly palace? Shrink not the petty rocks and towers that crown its surface, into mole-hills and bull-rushes, beside its stately walls and immeasurable arches? In this gigantic laboratory all the operations of Nature perform their everlasting course. Here, around the arch secret of our orb; here, around the magnet which makes our affinity with the stars, and holds the solid earth on its airy axis; here are the seeds and germs of all things—the elements of elements. This is the *Hades* of Earth—the dark Reign of Shadow—the Mystery of

Mysteries—the Wheel of the Vast Machine—the Mother that bears—the Grave that concealeth all! Welcome, stranger! I—human, like thyself alone with thee in these awful depths—I bid thee welcome.” Thereat a coldness and chill penetrated into my marrow, although my heart beat with a wild exulting joy to find myself thus privileged above my race. I bowed down my head, and after a pause, in which I endeavoured to nerve and to collect myself, I replied:—

“Dark and mysterious Shade! I know not well in what words to answer thee; for I cannot persuade myself that I do not dream. From that gay, light, wild revel of last night, how drear and solemn a transition! Something in my adventures hitherto has been human and familiar. I might imagine Asmodeus of my own race, and the witches of my own flesh. These occasioned me the surprise of amusement, not the marvel of awe. I am past the growth of mind when curiosity or fear is powerful; and I have known enough of mortal friendships not to be very much alarmed at having a devil for a companion; but now my heart is at once roused and appalled. Tell me, O magician! where are those whom I saw yesternight? Do they, too, inhabit these realms, or were they but creatures raised by thy wand—gay yet grotesque delusions, the incongruous but not terrible beings of a dream,—but thou of that dream the mystic and mighty god, moved not, relaxing not, at the fantastic mirth of the phantoms thou createdst?”

“They thou speakest of,” replied Kosem Kesa-

mim, "are yet palpable and living, as they seemed to thee; but their homes penetrate not into these stern recesses. They hold the purlieus of the temple, but their steps cross not the veil."

"And why, Enchanter, am I distinguished above them?"

"Because thou darest more. Thou wouldst cross an ocean of fire for a novelty on the other shore; and in this temper I recognise what once was my own. The key to all mysteries is the thirst to discover: the search for novelty is the invention of truth."

"But how comes it, O Kosem Kesamim, that these ladies ever arrived at the dignity of witchcraft? Some of them, I grant, silent and weird, looked fitting receptacles for such solemn gifts of the spirit; but my buxom coquette, my lively Jesthah, appears somewhat too earthly a lamp for so preternatural a light."

"Ask not these questionous now," replied the sad voice, that dampened, as it spoke, my returning vivacity; "but while yet in these hoar recesses, summon thy graver powers to seize advantage of the occasions offered them."

"I am prepared," said I, in a subdued tone, "for all thou canst show me."

We moved on silently; but I found by the current of air that rushed against my face, and by the swiftness with which arch and column glided by, that some unseen power unconsciously winged my steps, and that our progress was suited to the mighty space that we traversed. And now we paused below a circular chasm in the rocks, that

seemed to rise spirally and lessening upward; and from this chasm I heard a wild and loud hubbub, but no distinct sound.

"Is this the Cavern of the Winds?" said I, stunned by the mingled uproar.

"This is as the Ear of the Earth," replied the Enchanter, "and through this channel come down all the tidings of the million tribes of mankind. From the first breath in Paradise, from the first whisper of Eve's virgin love—from the first murmur of Adam's repenting soul, to the universal clamour of contending interests, crimes, and passions that now agitate the crowded world—all come mellowed and separate down, confused, indeed, to thy ear, but distinct and intelligible to that Being which the sounds are destined to reach and guide."

"And who is that Being?" said I, wonderingly.

"Look yonder!" answered Kesamim, raising his shadowy arm.

I looked in the quarter to which he pointed, and beheld, on a Throne of gray stone, gigantic, motionless, an aged Man, or rather a man-like Shape. His vast countenance was unutterably and dreadfully calm; his brows, like the Olympian Jove's, overhung his majestic features; but the orbs beneath were dull and lifeless, there was no ray in them.

"Is that death?" said I, shrinking back; "if so, it is the death of a god."

"Look again," said the deep voice of the magician, and I obeyed. Then I saw that around him (so that he sat, as it were in the midst) was a web of numberless fine and subtle threads, the ends of which disappeared among the million apertures

round, pores, as it were, of the rock; and then as my eye, waxing bold, gazed more intently, I found, that with every hollow blast that descended momentarily from the upper world, his hands, scarce moving, so quiet *was* the motion, touched some one or other of these meshes, and straight threads here and there snapped asunder, and the shape of the web changed, but slightly, and only in parts. Then saw I that the dulness of the eyes was not of Death, but Blindness.

“And who, said I, within my breath, “is that dread old man?”

“He,” answered Kesamim, “who moves in blindness, but with method, the strings of the external world. He moves the puppets, men and kings; he snaps or weaves the meshes of life; he sends forth through those webs the electric orders to the lower delegates of the universe—the Monster King, whom you call Ocean, and the Spirit of the leaping Fires. He, so mute and worn with years, is yet the life and principle of the restless machine of earth. How far wise or gifted none know;—himself a mystery, he unravels none. And it is the dark, relentless, inscrutable office he wields, from which men, shuddering at the unseen power, have taken the dream of Destiny; and others, noting blindness amidst the power, have conceived the term of Chance. But he himself is *Nameless*.”

While I was yet gazing, I felt myself hurried on. The gray old man vanished gradually from my eyes, and the descent of the sounds of earth faded on my ear as the voice of a distant waterfall.

We now travelled upward; and darting through one of the intricate chasms that yawned on the side of a lofty rock, we glided on till a more cheerful light than that which had hitherto guided us, streamed down; and making towards it, I suddenly found myself in a most beautiful city, not, indeed, vast and gloomy, like the nature-formed palaces I had just left, but a city built by human hands for human habitation. Theatres, circuses, squares, met me on every side. Yet still I noted that there was no heaven above, and that the light which illumined the place was from artificial sources; but they were rosy and cheerful lights, such as should look on the meetings of lovers, or the revelry of voluptuous gardens. And all around, the inscriptions on the walls, the shapes of the buildings, the fashion of the streets,—was unfamiliar, though evidently human. “And what, O Enchanter! what new wonder is this?”

But the Enchanter was gone, and by my side stood Asmodeus, helping his nose to a pinch of snuff.

“Your obedient servant, sir,” said the Devil, coolly; “having looked at the figures of the dial so long, what think you now of the clockwork?”

“Asmodeus, is that really you? What a vision have I seen! But where is the Great Enchanter?”

“Gone! He loves not these lightsome abodes. Humanity in thine inferior shape will not bear, too long at a time, the solemn marvels to which thou hast been admitted. He has, therefore, kindly conducted thee hither, for a short respite, and will reveal to thee more of the stern secrets of his wis-

dom anon. Meanwhile, thou art in a city which an antiquary would give his ears to visit. Know, that above thee glows an eastern sun, and these stately buildings are not far beneath the surface of the Earth."

"And is this the work of Kesamim?"

"The work of fiddlestick!" replied Asmodeus, tartly—"of mere vulgar mechanics, some four thousand years ago. At some short distance from the spot on which this city formerly stood, is a lofty mountain, once a volcano; but the flames have been dried these thirty centuries, and this city, in an hour of revelry and feasting, became its prey. The camels of the traveller pass over it; none (not even tradition) know what hath been. This is no vulgar Pompeii, no hacknied Herculaneum. It is a treasure known but to us and our agreeable friends the witches."

"Ha! then they reside here: upon my word, they have excellent taste."

"And," continued the Devil, entering a very pretty bachelor sort of house, "these are your lodgings. I have set out your dressing-table for you, and brought over your wardrobe on the soul of the Duke of B——'s shoulders—big enough to carry any thing."

"Excellent Devil!"

And a very pretty dressing room it was:—there were dandies in those days! A bath room of white marble, a mirror of polished steel, balconies filled with vases of bronze, tables on which curling-tongs, pincers, paint-pots, and wax for the eyebrows, a little hardened by age, made a part of the scene.

One might have thought oneself in the boudoir of Duchess de——.

“You have made a mistake, Mody; this must have been a lady’s apartment.”

“Ah, no!—I remember the owner well—a great friend of mine—such a *beau garçon*! He was just dyeing his hair a light green, (the fashionable colour at that day,) when the flood burst over him. But while you are eating your breakfast—the witches always send one of their band to market for dainties in the Palais Royale; you remember that corner shop?—while you are eating your breakfast, (you see it is very comfortably set in the niche by the window,) shall I tell you the news of the upper earth?”

“Especially of London; but tell me, how came you here? Jesthah informed me that you required a special permission; did you receive it, and from whom?”

“Jesthah told you right. I was summoned by Kosem Kesamim from a house at Cincinnati, where Mrs. Trollope’s book on America had just arrived.”

“Ah! a droll book enough, but full of absurdities. A work like Mrs. Trollope’s resembles a pantaloon’s acting; one laughs at the tricks, but one would not do them oneself for the world. It is the sort of approbation that belongs to contempt; and the more one is amused, the more one despises the source of the amusement.”

“The Americans say that they would not receive very cordially a lady travelling with Miss Wright, who, in the midst of a nation particularly

starched on the affairs of the sex, preached up the absurdity of marriages; so that her abuse, according to them, is only retaliation."

"And it is only the more ordinary ranks whose manners the good lady thinks vulgar. (Open the Chablis, old fellow!) She allows that the *elegants* preserved a mysterious exclusiveness; so that, in fact, it is those classes who, in England, would be wringing their souls out at their fingers' ends in a retail trade of candles, soap, pepper, mousetraps, and other sweetmeats to pay their rent, their bills, and their taxes, whom she finds living well, talking big, and going to balls, and instead of being surprised at their prosperity, she is surprised at their vulgarity. Now, if you, Asmodeus, were to sit down and describe the domestic habits of Wapping and Shoreditch, and then call the book 'England,' you would go hard on out-trolloping Trollope herself."

"But," said Asmodeus, sneeringly, "no free states ever do enjoy the grace of manner that belongs to despotic ones. The English seemed as rude to the Old French as Mrs. Trollope's Americans to the most fastidious English."

"Right," said I, "nations alone are judges of their own conventional manners—one nation cannot censure another. The lively Frenchman seems the most vulgar of all animals to the solemn Turk. Vulgarity *of mind*, not of manners, is the only vulgarity which a people can charge against their neighbours.* Mrs. Trollope accuses the Ameri-

* It is rather singular that about the very time there appears among us Mrs. Trollope's English attack on American manners,

cans of this vulgarity, but in vain. The very rudeness of their equality belies the charge, (mental vulgarity is always servile to wealth,) and the

a much finer (and a much cleverer) person than Mrs. Trollope, Prince Puckler Muskau, has published a work equally severe upon *our* want of breeding and manners. In fine, it is impossible for any traveller to be an *arbitrator elegantiarum* to any country but his own. The Frenchman, spitting into a handkerchief held at arm's length, is to us the acme of vulgarity. The Englishman, with a coat skirt under each arm, basking and soothing his "rearward man" by the fire, which he carefully conceals from the ladies he is flirting with, seems equally monstrous to the Frenchman. We called George IV. the finest gentleman in Europe, and the allied Sovereigns, when in London, thought him the essence of *mauvais ton*. There is a very good example of the difference between conventional and real, i. e. mental vulgarity, in the Memoirs of Sir James Campbell, lately published. Sir James visits Voltaire, not, he has the curious hardihood to admit, in order to admire the man, but to shoot over the man's preserves. "One day at table, Voltaire, in cutting up a partridge, first thrust his fork into it, and then put the fork into his mouth, apparently to ascertain if the *fumette* was as he would have it. He then cut it up, and sent a part of it to me, (Sir James;) I sent it away without eating of it, and on his asking the reason, I told him the true one, without any circumlocution, that in carving the partridge, he had used a fork which had just been in his own mouth." Here is the conventional vulgarity in Voltaire,—very disagreeable, but that designs no rudeness; and here, in the poor little stranger, the proudest day of whose life ought to have been that in which he saw the Lord of Ferney, is the mental vulgarity that wantonly insults. But we have not yet done with our example. Voltaire, so far from thinking the ill-breeding lay at his door, replies with a sardonic laugh, "that the English were a strange people, and had singular customs!" So much for the judgment one country forms of the manners of another. But to go on with our parallel: "This little scene," says Sir James Campbell, with all the innocent exultation of the true Jeremy Diddler, "however, did not prevent

purity of their political idols proves a certain largeness of mind. No vulgar souls could appreciate Franklin, or adore Washington. The true vulgarity—that is, mental smallness, is in Mrs. Trollope herself. The Americans point to their cities; their senate; their public institutions; their cheap food; their universal education; and Mrs. Trollope says the men sup in one room, and the women in another. They point to the Colossus, and Mrs. Trollope sneers at the ring on its little finger!”

“Never mind her nonsense,” said the Devil, yawning, “but prepare for news—Goethe is dead.”

“Dead—the Great Spirit gone!”

“And the ‘Atlas’* newspaper says he was but a very poor creature after all,”

“What wonderful stores has he left behind him! every work illumining a separate train of thought.

me from occasionally dining with him, or from shooting over his estate.” No, we’ll be sworn it did not; and in that remark lies the very soul of mental vulgarity, chuckling over the wit of its own littleness.

* What could induce the able editor of the “Atlas” to admit so very discreditable an attack on Goethe—as the one alluded to in the text? Can he suppose that the man who changed the whole literature of Germany, perhaps of Europe, was not a genius of the highest order? We are sorry, by the way, to find our contemporary stand forth as the champion for the taxes on Knowledge. He has been already so fully answered in the “Examiner” and “The True Sun,” that we shall not at present revert to his arguments; but we think sufficiently well of his Journal, despite, by the way, of certain slighting remarks on ourself, that we shall hope to see a treble sale of it when the said taxes are removed, as a practical reply to his anticipations.

‘Werther,’ ‘Wilhelm Meister,’ ‘Faust.’ How different—how mighty each!”

“Nevertheless,” said Asmodeus, “the ‘Wilhelm Meister’ is a wonderfully stupid novel.”

“What an effect it produced on me!—what a new world it opens. You read the book, and you wonder why you admire it. When you have finished it, you find yourself enriched: it is like a quiet stream that carries gold with it—the stream passes away insensibly, but the gold remains to tell where it has been. This is the great merit of the books of the German Masters—ineffective in parts, the effect, as a whole, is wonderfully deep. ‘Wilhelm Meister’ is to the knowledge of thoughts what ‘Gil Blas’ is to the knowledge of the world. Peace to the ashes of a man who has left no equal! What next?”

“The House of Lords was up at seven o’clock in the morning for the good of their country! We shall never hear the end of it.”

“And the Bill?”—

“Floated off by nine little drops.”

“And the New Peers?”—

“Fructifying still in Lord Grey’s pocket.”

“And the Waverers?”—

“Made speeches on this Bill, in which they answered their objections to the other. The universal wonder is, why the light that has visited Lord Warncliffe’s and Lord Harrowby’s eyes did not deign to visit them long before. The newspapers, with Mr. Radical in the midst of them, tell the people to be excessively grateful to these two individuals; as if to do good to the people through

necessity were a greater favour than doing them good through choice. The people are not such fools, and consider tardy kindness as mammon wisdom. But what a strange House—the House of Lords is! Here is a question exactly the same now as it was some few months ago, and yet this notable assembly have put on their spectacles, and declared it quite a different thing. They sent the Bill, when the Commons were first delivered of the Brat, out of their House, and now declare it has been changed at nurse. Good easy gossips! How the world laughs in its sleeve at them! They put me in mind of the city sparks in some London Tavern, who send away the bottle of bad Port in order to seem fine; and when the waiter, with a grave face, brings them back exactly the same bottle, they shake their wise noddles at each other and say, ‘Ah, this is quite a different thing, waiter!’”

“Did you see the great Duke? How looked he?—lowering?”

“Nay, he smiled, Prometheus like, and has vented his wrath in a Protest (a sort of political kite) that is to go to posterity charged with the Duke’s wisdom, and a long tail of small names pinned to the end of it; a proof, as it were, how many silly little men were hereditary legislators in the reign of William IV. But there was one thing that delighted me in the debate—the rage the good Lords were in at being supposed capable of any intellectual effort. ‘I write for the newspapers!’ cries my Lord Durham, in horror. ‘My son-in-law write for the times!’ echoes the Pre-

mier. 'What a calumny!' says Lord Durham. 'It is enough to agonize one,' groans Lord Grey. 'But,' cries Lord Durham, collecting all his venom, and darting a fiery look at the poor Bishop of Exeter, 'any libel is not too bad for a man who can write popular pamphlets.' 'Order! order!' cries the House. 'Take down his words.' Accuse a Bishop of writing good pamphlets!—horrible breach of privilege—to be supposed able to write decently. The noble Lords might spare themselves the trouble of denial. The 'Times' would not be worth abusing if their Lordships had much to do with it."

"But there's the Duke of Newcastle—has not he just committed a pamphlet?"

"Yes, to prove to the complete satisfaction of the Universe, that a Duke has not the remotest idea of English—'tis a type of the Peerage—sounding and brainless."

"Oh, Asmodeus! sometimes I think thee a Tory, sometimes a Whig. Which art thou?"

"Sir! would you insult me?—is it not bad enough to be a devil?"

"Well, and the cholera?"—

"Amusing itself in Paris, and listening to false accusations in London. Every thing is laid to the poor cholera's charge. There was a still room-maid died of having Lady Holland for a mistress—a very natural death, and, of course, it is the cholera that killed her."

"Ah," said I, "died of Hollands—those ardent spirits are worse than the cholera; but his Lordship, at least, must be confessed to be weak enough."

“And what else?”—

“A fine mind is grown darkened—a more interesting sight to some people than all the vulgar squabbles of States. Oh, it is a strange spectacle to see shadow after shadow darkening over the human Temple, until the light is quenched at the altar, and the Priest passed from the aisle, and the blind bat, and the birds of night cower and brood over the Holy of Holies, gibbering, and wild, and flitting restlessly to and fro. But this was a mind I have marked from its youth upwards, and seen the germ of the deadly tree slowly—slowly unfold. When the crowd laughed at the wit, I was by, and saw that the shaft came from a loosened bow; when the crowd whispered, and spake of ‘humours,’ I was by, and knew that the start and the mutter were of the brain’s disease. And now I have mixed in the mob of the time-servers, and seen what pity a man who feasts, and shines on, them, can glean. ‘Poor man! very shocking, and I dined there last month; but he was always disagreeable.’ It is a fierce moral, when some great Wo darts into lofty houses, singles out some one whom Fortune honours, Genius serves often in the mouths of men, and bids him come forth from his greatness, and walk with the Lazars of mankind; it is a fierce moral, but none heed it. Men,” said the Devil, sinking into his familiar vein of jesting, “men are like perches; one may pull you out by dozens without your taking the slightest alarm at the fate of your comrades. As for all the rest of the world, things go on much the same as before. Whenever Ministers are embarrassed by

an awkward motion, they don't make a House; and when a Member, seeing his motion thus scattered to the winds, ventures to complain, Lord Palmerston affects the supercilious, and assures him that himself and his motion are 'not of the slightest importance to the public.' People go to the theatres, and Charles Kemble acts Macbeth. Lord Mulgrave has written a novel, which I intend to read aloud to the ladies of Cyprolis, (so this city is called,) for which, no doubt, his brother Lords think him especially unfitted to go out to Jamaica. To be at all clever is to be uncalculated for public service. Statesmen of the true red box caliber, catch places as oysters catch pearls, by sitting quietly and gaping for them. Meanwhile there are Easter holidays in London; and people are striving to amuse themselves a little in the intervals of politics—much with the same success as the German who jumped out of window, exclaiming, ruefully, 'See how I am trying to be lively!'

"Thanks, my good Devil, enough for the present; my breakfast is finished—my toilet arranged—lend me your arm. So so! let us make our bow to the Witches."

CHAPTER V.

My Life at Cyprolis—What is real?—What not?—Knowledge a series of Plagiarisms—New books—Maid of Elvar—Con-tarini Fleming—The King's Theatre, and Robert the Devil—The Cheap Press—The Penny Magazine—Fairness of the Operations of Stamp Duty—Motion against the Taxes on Knowledge—Monopoly—American Papers—Objections answered—Postage—The "Original," &c. &c.—Kosem Kes-mim—His Nature—Particulars about the Witches—Custom and Mystery—Curiosity likely to be gratified.

I FIND, dear reader, that narrating my adventures to you only once a month, and sometimes not so often—I am forced to leave frequent gaps in my recital. It requires a long stride to keep up with the March of Events, and to talk to you only on those matters which are either interesting at all times, or interesting from their connexion with the moment. How much then must I omit!—What scenes with my dear Witches!—What delightful hours with my beloved Jesthah!—Yes, reader, I still remain in that old buried City, with its gigantic arches, and porphyry temples, and silent fountains, and unechoing areas. Every evening is spent with the Witches in the most agreeable rattling conversation, over the romance, the anecdote the scandal of the past. Such stories are ripped up, that Time had stowed away in his budget, never dreaming they could again be routed

forth into day—the amours of all courts, from the Egyptian Ptolemies to the English Anne, (for no Witch had been enrolled in the free list at Cyprus since the latter period) are detailed to me with the most refreshing earnestness! I listen, shrug my shoulders, swear the world was very bad in those days, and ask leave to teach Jesthah the last fashion in kissing. Happy hours! One man among so many ladies, though they be Witches, need be no Wizard to be a little in request. Happy hours! —I shall look back to you as a dream.—Yet you are realities, and I shall remember as much of you, as men ever remember of that past in which they once lived. I remember as much of you as a Rector does of Greek—as a Politician of the Public—as the World does of Virtue—as Virtue of the World;—yet how many silly people will say that I am deceiving them—that I never saw Jesthah—that I never talked with Kosem Kesamim—that Asmodeus exists not—and that my life, my very life, my thoughtful, bustling, various life, is but a drop of ink, created by a goose-quill, and passed on no broader superficies than a sheet of paper! Alas, what is real if the mind be not? Is that which in the dim chambers of our decaying memory lies all mouldering and unheeded, more real, more palpable, more living than the bright creatures of our fancy? No! Fancy is a life itself, and the world we create has as much of truth as the world that was created for us. The all-merciful Father blessed us with imagination as a counterpoise to the sufferings of experience.

And every day I walk forth among those ruins,

and by the help of Witch-lore, decipher the language of four thousand years back, which is engraved on many a marble wall, and many an archived scroll. I here see how Wisdom has travelled from age to age—as a river that flows through our mortality—visible in its course—but in its sources undiscovered. For in these scrolls I behold the doctrines claimed by the Greeks—their beautiful thoughts—their high and endearing dreams, all bodied forth in the more luxuriant imagery of the East, and, indeed, they were rather simplified than enlarged by those bright purloiners, who stole from the Heaven of Fame the fire that belonged not to their race, but which so stolen never can expire.

And every morning to breakfast, previously to my adventurous roving, comes my attentive Demon, full of the news of the upper world, laden with books and journals, reports and truths—and making me as much conversant with the little squabbles on the world's surface, as if I were, as heretofore, a partner of them!—I recollect spending one morning deliciously over a whole cargo of new books. Beautiful “Maid of Elvar!”*—what pleasure did I owe to you! Reader, you love not Poetry, neither do I in general:—Like the taste for fruits—like the hungering after the sweet scent of flowers—like the quiet rapture of repose at noon, beneath the oak or beside the stream—like the delicious melancholy of the twilight, and that rosy

* Maid of Elvar, A Poem, by Allan Cunningham.—Moxon, 64, New Bond Street.

star which once reminded us of how much love is blended by God with our harsher nature—like all the soft and magical delights that our youth nurst, and our manhood hastens to forget, the love of Poetry departs beneath the anxieties of life. Man's progress is an emblem of the progress of his race. At first the mountain and the free step, at last the city and the careful eye. But when such a Poem comes before you as the "Maid of Elvar," neglect it not, pause to inhale its beauty, as if it were a breeze of the fresh air. By a stanza from itself, I will give you its own description.

"He came unto a small and pleasant bay—
A crescent-bay half garlanded with trees,
Which scented all the air; whose blossoms gay
Were rife with birds, and musical with bees;
And danced in beauty in the seaward breeze;
While o'er the grove ascended Elvar Tower,
A mark by land, a beacon on the seas—
With fruit trees crowned, and gardens hung in flower,
Dropt round with fairy knolls and many an elfin bower."

Hark, again, how beautiful a strain!—are not the glades before us?

"The ripe corn waved in lone Dalgonar glen,
That, with its bosom basking in the sun,
Lies like a bird; the hum of working men
Joins with the sound of streams that southward run,
With fragrant holms atween; then mix in one
Beside a church, and round two ancient towers
Form a deep fosse. Here sire is heired by son,
And war comes never: *ankle deep in flowers*
In summer walk its dames among the sunny bowers."

What richness, yet what simplicity in the line below marked in Italics!

—————"There was odorous store
Of bloom for bees; both bank and brae were sown

With glowing foxgloves and with gowans hoar;
A trout-steam shot through all, and sang beside the door."

All the Poet's descriptions are full of minute truth, nothing is vague, nothing is mere description, all is the result of close observing, that deep observing which marks the skilled eye of the Minstrel to whom

"In Nature there is nothing melancholy"—

and nothing homely. The same beauty which so strikingly characterizes Thomson, that knitting up word after word, into one chaplet of living representation, marks all the rural descriptions of this thoroughly genuine and National Poet. Take, for instance the following lines:—

"The thatched stack-yard, the naked stubble ridge,
 The scree leaves heaped, these all are certain signs
 The fruitful season's o'er; the leafless hedge
 With songsters' nest revealed, tell now the reins
 Of rule have passed to sterner hands: in chains
 The lakes are bound, the forest trees are reeling
 Beneath the axe: the snowy monarch reigns
 On hills, and drives the shepherd from his shealing;
 And cold, like age on man, is o'er the wide land stealing.

* * * * *

The golden hours of the glad years are gone;
 The forest's fragrant plumes are pluck'd—how short,
 And stormy, too, the journey of the sun;
 The vessel gladly makes her destined port;
 The hares unto the green kale-yards resort;
 The plough lies idle in the half-drawn furrow;
 The barnman's chaff comes down like snow; his sport
 The hunter takes; the rabbit keeps his burrow;
 And old men shake their locks, and sigh 'tis winter thorough."

Yet it is a pity, that for a Poem so carefully ela-

borated, so deeply brooded over, so evidently formed for the Temple of Allan Cunningham's fame, so far greater than any thing he has yet done, and so solidly great in itself; it is a pity that a metre should have been chosen which, though inexpressibly rich and melodious, has been so dinned into our ears by all the Poetasters of the last twenty years. The Music has grown wearisome from its commonness. Some years hence, the objection will cease to exist. Our children will not have read the numberless poems in the same metre that we have. The natural sweep of the verse will no longer be rendered "stale and cheap by vulgar company," but it may operate against the present popularity of a Poem which Scotland ought to feel proud of. It is essentially Scotch, essentially the Poetry of one Land and one People. We tread on the heaths of Scotland, we hear the rush of her streams, we see her lone glens and weird defiles as we wander on. Oh, beautiful "Maid of Elvar!" in a happy time wert thou born; thou belongest to the summer; and while the summer lasteth I will turn to thee again and again, and wish for no sweeter companion in the basking noon, than the odours that breathe from thy russet garments!

It is strange; that in such stormy times, Literature should glide on so smoothly and with so many adventurers on the stream! We are literally, if Asmodeus tells me right of the upper world, inundated with new books and new events. To-day we open the last novel; to-morrow we forget it in

the last rumour! Here is "Contarini Fleming" on the one hand, and the arrest of Chateaubriand on the other, both deserving of all our attention, and neither, therefore, engrossing it. Certainly Mr. D'Israeli is a writer of very great genius, and "Contarini Fleming" is so vast an improvement on "Vivian Grey" and "The Young Duke," that it is difficult for me to believe it written by the same man. Nevertheless, the critics declare it could be written by no other. The tone of "The Young Duke" was painful: you felt that the Author should not have stooped to the performance; its vivacity was strained; its story unconnected; and the play of the writer's style too restless and unquiet. "Contarina Fleming" is the product of a far older mind; a travelled mind; a meditative mind; a mind gradually filtering itself of its early impurities of taste and discrepancies in judgment. The tone of it is more enlarged and benevolent than that of the former writings; and though, by the superficial, it is called extravagant, it is, in reality, remarkably succinct, whole and uniform, in its plot, conduct, and purpose. The mass of readers will not perceive its object, and, therefore, it seems to them bizarre, merely because its meaning is not on the surface. In fact, "Contarina Fleming" is a delineation of abstract ideas, in which, as in "Wilhelm Meister," the Author is often allegorical and actual at the same time. Each character is a personification of certain trains of mind; but in that personification the Author

* Contarina Fleming.—Murray.

now and then forgets himself, and deals only with the external world, which he designed at first merely as the covering to metaphysical creatures. I compare it, in this instance, to "Wilhelm Meister." And I am quite certain that if "Wilhelm Meister" had never been written, "Contarini Fleming" would never have walked into the ideal world. Yet, for all that, there is no imitation in story, character, and least of all, style. The subdued calm of Göethe is as different as possible from the varying brilliancy of the author of "Contarini Fleming." "Wilhelm Meister" is the mature produce of a very stupendous, brooding mind, that worked out the block of nature from the most artificial and recondite tools. All in Göethe was the Artist—the great Artist—and all in "Wilhelm Meister" breathes of that Art, and of the time, thought, musing, which had been devoted to its cultivation. The true nature of Mr. D'Israeli's talents is, on the contrary, vivid, sparkling, passionate. He writes much better when he paints the Outward which belongs to Passion, than the Inward, which belongs to Thought. One of the best parts of his book, and one of the best and most racy descriptions of life any work of fiction since Fielding (certainly not excluding even "Anastasis") contains, is in volume the first, when the young Adventurer attempts the robber life, which was once so alluring to the youth of Germany. On the other hand, nothing but the dazzle of the diction can blind us to various contradictions, and to much hasty paradox, in all the reflective portions of the work. Has Mr. D'Israeli sufficiently studied

Locke? No man should turn to the German philosophy till he is deep-read in the English. Locke, above all, is the essential groundwork of speculation. That great Philosopher forms the right train of thought; shows, by a glance, where discursion leads to nothing, and where it is worth risking; he preserves us, in a word, from all errors but his own, or rather lights us to truth by a lamp which we afterwards turn back upon his own few contradictions and many deficiencies. But while Mr. D'Israeli is, we apprehend, yet a novice when he reflects, he often becomes a master when he creates. His personifications of idea are excellent, though his dilations on ideas may be crude. What a character he has made of Winter! I know nothing in the English language like it in conception, or more elaborately executed: it is only a pity that we have so little of this fine ideal. To sum up, in this work the Author has shown a power—a fertility—a promise—which we sanguinely trust will produce very considerable and triumphant results. He has shown, by much improvement, that he can improve more. A certain revolution is going on within his mind; right and deep ideas are gradually banishing wrong and erratic notions; and—striking, admirable in many most brilliant points, as every unprejudiced critic must allow “Contarini Fleming”—the Author will yet (he may believe me) far outshine it. By the way, I see he is standing for Wycombe:—joy be with him! A man of such talent and such knowledge ought to be in Parliament, more especially when the powers he possesses are pledged to the advance

of those Great Truths which are now so firmly rooted in the Hearts of the People.

Thus half slowly criticising, half carelessly rambling on, it is my custom to pore over the works which the Devil transports from the circulating libraries above. Sometimes, however, I prefer talking with my amusing companion over those circles which, to my great surprise, manage to flourish without me. I laugh at the indignation of Asmodeus, at the dreadful caricature they have made of his fellow Devil at the Opera House, where, Asmodeus assures me, that music without science, and a story without interest, are dragged on throughout a whole night under the name of Robert the Devil." "The scenery," says Asmodeus, "is well enough, I allow. But only imagine a performance lasting from eight to half-past twelve, without any *other* merit than scenery; the length of every scene, the interminable duration of every song seems to denote that they could not be contented to play the Devil without giving us a notion of the perpetuity of his punishments. What a moral! Certainly Mr. Mason must be the most conscientious man in the world! He has done more to weary London of the Devil than all his managerial brethren ever did to attract mankind towards the same personage. Oh! what a man it is! With what a spirit he goes on ruining the Opera! It is quite delightful to see a gentleman so bent upon one subject. I suspect he is hired by some Prynné of the present day, to destroy insidiously the King's Theatre. No man could, by chance, have been so systematically unfit for his

situation. Well, well; if the town won't go to 'the Devil,' I know who is likely to supply the Town's place; and therewith Asmodeus made a note in his memorandum-book. For my part, I like this easy, worldly, sneering vein in the Devil's conversation; I like a companion who seems to have his senses about him, and who, though damned himself, knows exactly what ought to be damned in others.

One morning among other papers, Asmodeus brought me down a large cargo of the offspring of what is called the cheap press. What a fund of delight a man may now purchase for a shilling! One may pack up a library to take down to the moors, and have change out of half-a-crown. It is pleasant to see that while every thing for the use of the outward form keeps up its price, something really cheap may be bought for the mind. A quartern loaf lasts a day, and costs 10d., but a number of a new Magazine may give Thought food for a year,—and costs only a penny. The penny Magazine is indeed excellent so far as it goes, but there is something ludicrous in the delicate infelicity with which it coquets with the law. It seems so mighty anxious to avoid Politics, and yet it cannot avoid containing *news*. And news is as much against the law as politics. What absurdity, what monstrous absurdity! The law says, "Intelligence" must not be sold under seven-pence. But our Lawgivers themselves sell Intelligence for a penny, and yet turn the Law upon others. The Society for the diffusion of Useful Knowledge have his Majesty's Ministers for Members—they send

out their own Penny Paper to-day, and prosecute another man's Penny Paper to-morrow. I recollect Sir Robert Peel said once on the Game Laws—"Can a country gentleman officiate conscientiously as a Magistrate, and send a man to prison for breaking those laws which his own son breaks every day?" Is there not the same glaring partiality in publishing a paper as there was once in shooting a partridge? Can a Minister patronise one who breaks the same Law for which he casts another man into prison? What a vast field is opened to our gaze the moment we approach the Stamp-duty on Papers! We might harangue for hours and not say a tithe of what ought to be said. In Mr. Bulwer's speech on his Motion for the removal of the Taxes on Knowledge, he dwelt on the contraband circulation of pernicious doctrines that were left unanswered because the law forbade an answer.* "But what," cries one of the Papers, "are pernicious doctrines?" The Whigs call the Tory doctrines pernicious—the Tories retort on the Whigs—both unite against the Levellers—the attackers of Property and the advocates of assassination; and the last party perhaps

* Will it be believed that some of the newspapers—dreading perhaps the competition they ought not to dread, for they could not be so ignorant of the present law—have positively asked—"Why, if the poison is circulated now at a penny, is not the antidote also circulated at the same price?" Why! because the law forbids it—because the contraband paper is written by those who defy the law—and those only.—There is *not one contraband political paper that is AN ANTIDOTE to the numberless envenomed ones!*—What a fact!—What a subject for delay—for indifference—for neglect!

think themselves sincerely in the right.* Which are the pernicious doctrines?—the answer is very short—Any doctrine not fully canvassed, and constantly discussed, is *sure* to become pernicious at last! We are quite sure that the doctrines of the cheap contraband papers must be wrong, because the Law obliges them to be all one way—because they must be violent, and may not be discussed—because the Law cannot put down the violence, and forbids the counterpoise. When Religion itself was the property of the Monks—when difference of sectarian opinion was not allowed—Religion preached up crusades and inquisitions—zeal was murder, and virtue was donations to the Church. It is the same with Reason as it was with Religion—to be safely exercised it must be generally exercised—to the errors of one sect oppose the opinions of the other sect. Truth perishes wherever there is Monopoly. At present the contraband press is the Monopoly of violent opinion. Open that Monopoly! Nature and Truth are alike in this—their great results are worked out from the opposite elements. A Monopoly of alkali in the physical system, would be the same as a Monopoly of one set of opinions in the moral. The “Times” says justly that it would have nothing to fear from the repeal of the Stamp Duty.†

* For all these doctrines *are* advocated very frankly in some of the contraband Papers.

† “We should gain,” adds the ‘Times,’—“but we doubt if the public would—we should sell a great many more copies—but the public would be inundated with cheap, bad papers.” Does not our acute Contemporary see that the two arguments

Nor did the Motion for that repeal, nor the speech of the Mover, drive at such a consequence. The terrible power of one great Paper might be divided by the abolition of the Stamp Duty, but the sale would be necessarily increased. Many persons don't think so; but let them consider for a moment. Will not the multitude prefer always the best article?—does the best article suffer by becoming cheap?—does rivalry in shops prevent the best and most popular shop from making the greatest returns? Will it not be the same case with the Papers? Compare the “Constitutional” in its popular day with the “Times”—Compare!—the “Constitutional” is *not* to be compared with it in

destroy one another—if the sale of the good paper the “Times” will increase so greatly—does not the public as well as the “Times” benefit by that increase? If the “Times” can beat its rivals in public favour—the public is not contaminated by a rivalry so effectively counteracted. Take away the stamp, and the “Times” and “The Poor Man’s Guardian” would assume a tolerable equality in point of price. How many would purchase the “Times” for its excellence, that now purchase “The Poor Man’s Guardian” for its cheapness. We now force the Operative to buy bad papers—solely because they are the *only* papers he can afford to buy. We can adduce a curious instance of the truth. When Mr. Carpenter’s “Political Letter” sold for four-pence—eight hundred copies were sold weekly at Manchester; when it became seven-pence, only fifty were sold at Manchester. Did those who gave up the “Political Letter” purchase the Legitimate Journals? No! on inquiry it was ascertained that they either went without any paper—or they substituted for the “Political Letter”—“The Poor Man’s Guardian”—a Journal immeasurably more violent and inflammatory than the one they had deserted? Who, seeing this, can doubt, that to tax knowledge is to administer philtres to crime?

point of variety of talent and copiousness of intelligence; but the "Constitutional" sold for half the price, and consequently sold more than double the number. But the town will be inundated with cheap papers? Why not? the evil will soon cure itself. But then America—ay, just note how unfairly an argument may be wrenched aside. Mr. Bulwer cites America as an example of the fact that the number of Papers depends on the cheapness of Papers, whereon an opponent affects to suppose that he cites the instance as a proof of the excellence of the American papers, and he tells you that the American papers are abominable—Very likely; but the American papers are as good, on the whole, as the American books. Literature is far more advanced in this country than the United States;—there it is more general—here more lofty. We write better books than the Americans, and we write better papers—not on account of the price of the production, but the greater skill of the producer. Take away the Stamp of the paper—you don't take away the intellect from the Paper; yet some persons seem absolutely to think that the red mark confers a sort of Patent of Excellence. Is the unstamped Penny Magazine then so contemptible in its character? As regards the question of the Postage, there seems to be some mistake abroad in regard to Mr. Bulwer's precise Motion on the subject. He did not move that a Postage should be adopted, but that its expediency should be inquired into. It is a very intricate question requiring the most minute attention to details. But this fact is at least in its favour—it has

never failed whenever it has been adopted, and so little in France did it operate against the circulation of the Metropolitan Papers, that, as Mr. Bulwer stated, the number of Papers sent from Paris in 1829 doubled the number sent from Paris in 1825; while during those years in England there had been little or no variation in the number sent from London into the Provinces. Yet mark—it was in that country where a postage was put on a cheap Paper that the number sent from the Metropolis had doubled, and it was in that country where the Newspaper is dear, but no postage imposed, that the number had not varied!—a striking fact. But the question certainly demands deep inquiry. If, on examination, it appears that a postage *would* operate against the London, or, indeed, the country papers, there must be *no* Postage *upon* Papers—the Revenue must look elsewhere for compensation. But Books, Pamphlets, Circulars, all literary Publications—they, at least, might *unquestionably* be allowed to circulate cheaply by post—a tax that would be most advantageous to the Public, and sure to produce the same sum, at the lowest computation, as the odious advertisement duty!

What's this?—"The London Penny Journal"—very good—tales, sketches—as light as the Penny Magazine is wise. A penn'orth of sack to a penn'orth of bread. "The New Entertaining Press"—a respectable, tall, graceful, well-shaped young Gentleman, full of accomplishment and research.—Poetry, Criticism, Fiction, Morality, nothing comes amiss to him—you may breakfast with

him most agreeably, and his fee for attendance is only a Penny—heartily do I thank him for his reasonable charges, and his excellent qualities. But here is a three-penny Leviathan, sixteen pages of close print, and capital matter! Stories by the dozen—puns, jokes, reviews, and all manner of delicacies, for the dimidium of sixpence. Blessed be the name of “The Original!” It is really a most spirited, entertaining, and intelligent periodical. What a capital extravaganza! a Fishing Schoolmaster, angling and catching one of his own drowned disciples.

“Ye dreams of sport—too speedy in your flight,
Enough to make a *gentleman* grow *wild*;
How hard his lot, who hungering for a bite,
Must earn his meat *by bringing up a child!*”

“The British Drama and Literary Humorist,” full of plays and farces, a place where the damned are recovered,—and where the author takes his revenge on the manager that refused him, by proving the manager an ass—a very good idea, and very amusingly bodied forth. More—more—more Half-penny Magazines, Farthing Gazettes. Our old friend or foe, “The Literary Omnibus,” with a lampoon on ourself, which is now become a joke old enough in its mouth to be a little tiresome. And the pretty little pedant, with the household name of “The Tatler,” coming over us with a Mr. Bickerstaff air, and a ghostlike odour from the memory of White’s Chocolate House! A wide field and fair play for ye all, gentlemen—may ye live and flourish, and afford an encouragement

to this expensive world to be reasonable in its expenses as well as its views! It is a pleasant thing to see your honest faces smiling upon us with a friendly air of good-natured wisdom; and if I were not in Cyprolis, thinking of Jesthah and Queen Anne's Court, I would spend an hour in Fleet Street to watch the schoolboy and the mechanic buy his pennyworth of pleasant relaxation. What more touching thought, than that even by these fresh seeds springing up on the roadsides, we may judge of that future—that general—that all-supplying harvest of intellectual food which may reward hereafter our present labours. Free Trade in Thought, and no Corn Laws for the Mind!

The day seldom passes in Cyprolis without a visit from Kosem Kesamim. Sometimes, when I least expect it, I lift my eyes and behold his dim, undefined, and awful shape in the far recesses of my subterraneous chamber. Then, perhaps, he will converse for hours on high and mystic themes, in which only by fit and interval I can follow his shadowy words, or, as often without uttering a sound, he will gradually recede, and pass like a vapour from my eyes. The Witches all speak of him with wonder, and yet reserve; they concur in terming him a human and living shape, though gifted with superhuman powers, and having shunned the conditions of Life (Death) through a hundred ages—a man like ourselves in aught, save the powers of his sorcery. As to the Witches, it seems, that in every age, and within every country, this dread and singular magician has had the power to select one person, of either sex, whom, if the

selected so wills it, he may transplant yet living—though for ever dead to the common usages and tribes of Earth—to this preternatural life and these unseen abodes. Thus he gathers round him slowly, and from century to century, a grotesque and motley court—evidences of the duration of his own desolate and wondrous life. These, his subjects, are commonly dispersed in various depths and hollows of Earth; and only once a year they meet in one solemn and stately interview. This is the grand event of the Witch life, though it is varied with many minor gala days, and is, altogether, passed pleasantly enough, considering that the ladies and gentlemen live as separately as Mrs. Trollope's Americans. I stay here partly for the purpose of attending this great ceremonial—glad, too, of an excuse for learning more of mysteries, which gradually vanish into simple facts beneath the daily light of custom. Mystery!—sounding word!—apology for our own ignorance! No one thing is in itself more mystic than another; it is our imperfect sight that makes the monster and shapes forth the spectre. What is there more mysterious in the dark existence of this magician—in the life of his Court—in these still wastes of forgotten marble by which I am surrounded, than in the swarming life that peoples the drop of water—than the growth of the tree before our window—than the everlasting course of the seasons under which we glide insensibly from life to death? Magic incredible?—Pooh! Custom!—what magic in that one word!

I am not without hopes of learning, from the

lips of Kosem Kesamim, the secret of his own life. At times I venture to approach that subject, and he does not avoid it; nay, I believe that he will be disposed to——Ha!

* * * * *

While I wrote these last words, I chanced to turn—I beheld Him beside me! “And wouldst thou learn?” said the Magician, in that mournful voice which seems to breathe of the vanity of all knowledge, “wouldst thou, in truth learn the secret of his life who has conquered the ordinary laws which circumscribe his race? Somewhat of his gloomy history thou mightest indeed glean from his lips, but how much to thy soul would be lost, and utterly uncompassed! Yet thou shalt have a portion of thy wish. At midnight we shall meet again!”

With these words, the Sorcerer’s figure faded gradually away. I am alone—his words still ring in my ear—with what anxiety I shall watch for midnight!

CHAPTER VI.

A Scene—The Men of Old—The Tale of Kosem Kesamim.

It was deep night, and the Magician suddenly stood before me. "Arise," said he, "and let us go forth upon the surface of the World." I rose, and followed the Sorcerer through the dead vastness of the buried city, until we came to the entrance of a cavern. Pursuing its subterranean course for some minutes,—not with a natural swiftness of step, but with the gliding and rapid motion with which the Sorcerer passed; not touching the earth, but just above its soil, so that it was the air (which he could agitate and strengthen at will) which charioted us along;—pursuing, I say, the course of this cavern for some minutes, with the rushing sound of prisoned waters loud and wild upon the ear, we came, at length, to a spot where the atmosphere struck upon my breath with a chill and earthly freshness; and presently through a fissure in the rock, the sudden whiteness of the moon broke in, and lit up, partially, walls radiant with spars, and washed by a deep stream, that wound its mysterious way to the upper air. And now, gliding through the chasm, we stood in a broad cell with its lofty arch open to the sea. Column and spire (brilliant with various crystallizations—spars of all hues) sprang lightly up on either side

of this cavern—and with a leap and a mighty voice, the stream, whose course we had been tracking rushed into the arms of the great Sea. Along that sea, star after star mirrored its solemn lustre—and the Moon clad in a fuller splendour than I had ever seen gathered round her melancholy orb, filled the cavern with a light, that was to the light of day what the life of an Angel is to that of a Mortal: Passionless, yet tender—steadfast—mystic—unwavering—it shone upon the glittering spars, and made a holiness of the very air; and in a long line, from the cavern to the verge of heaven, her sweet face breathed a measured and quiet joy into the rippling billows—“smiles of the sea.”* A few thin and fleecy clouds alone varied the clear expanse of the heavens—and they rested, like the cars of spirits, far on the horizon.

“And beautiful,” said I, “is this outward earth—your dim realms beneath have nothing to compare with it. There are no stars in the temples of the hidden earth—and one glimpse from the lovely Moon is worth all the witchfires and meteors of the Giant palaces below.”

“Thou lookest, young Mortal,” said the wizard in his mournful voice, “over my native portion of the World. Beside that sea stood my ancestral halls—and beneath the moon first swelled within my bosom the deep tides of human emotion—and in this cavern, whence we now look forth on the seas and heavens, my youth passed some of its earnest hours in contemplation of that high and starred order which your lessened race—clogged with

* *Æschylus' Prometheus.*

the mire of ages—never know; for that epoch was far remote in those ages which even Tradition scarcely pierces. Your first fathers—What of their knowledge know ye?—what of their secrets have ye retained?—their vast and dark minds were never fathomed by the plummet of your researches. The waves of the black night have swept over the Antique World—and all that you can guess of its buried glories are from the shivered fragments that ever and anon Chance casts upon the shores of the Modern Race.”

“Do we sink then,” said I, “by comparison with the men of those distant times? Is not our lore deeper and more certain? Was not their knowledge the offspring of a confused and labouring conjecture? Did they not live among dreams and shadows, and make Truth itself the creature of a fertile imagination?”

“Nay,” replied the shrouded and uncertain form beside me—“their knowledge pierced deeper into the Heart of Things. They consulted the stars—but it was to measure the dooms of Earth;—and could we raise from the dust their perished scrolls, you would behold the mirror of the living times. Their prophecies—(wrung from the toil and rapture of those powers which ye suffer to sleep, quenched within the soul)—traversed the wilds of ages, and pointed out among savage hordes the Cities and Laws of Empires yet to be. Ten thousand Arts have mouldered from the Earth—and science is the shadow of what it was.—Young Mortal, thou hast set thine heart upon Wisdom—thou hast wasted the fresh and radiant hours

of opening life amidst the wearying thoughts of others;—thou hast laboured after Knowledge, and in that labour the healthful hues have for ever left thy cheek, and age creeps upon the core while the dew is yet upon the leaf; and for this labour—and in the transport and the vision that the soul's labour nurtures—your spirit is now rapt from its fleshly career on earth,—wandering at will amongst the dread chasms and mines wombed within the world, breathing a vital air amongst the dead,—comraded by Spirits, and the Powers that are not of flesh,—and catching, by imperfect glimpse and shadowy type, some knowledge of the arch mysteries of Creation;—and thou beholdest in me and in my science, that which thy learning and thy fancy tracked not before. No legend ever chanced upon my strange and solemn being: nothing in my nature resembles to the tales of Wizard or Sorcerer that the vulgar phantasies of Superstition have imbodyed. Thou hast seen what none have drawn—and Fable has hacknied not the Truth. Thou wouldst learn something of the Being thus permitted to thy marvel;—be it so. Under these sparkling arches—and before my ancestral sea—and beneath the listening ear of the halting Moon thou shalt learn a history of the Antique World.

THE TALE OF KOSEM KESAMIM.

Along the shores which for thirty centuries no human foot has trod—and upon the plains where now not one stone stands upon another, telling

even of decay—was once the city and the empire of the Wise Kings—for so termed by their neighbours were the monarchs that ruled this country. Generation after generation they had toiled to earn and preserve that name. Amidst the gloom of mysterious temples, and the oracular learning of the star-read priests, the youth of each succeeding King was reared into a grave and brooding manhood. Their whole lives was mystery. Wrapt in the sepulchral grandeur of the Imperial Palace—seen rarely—like gods—they sent forth, as from a cloud, the light of their dread but benign laws:—the courses of their life were tracked not—but they were believed to possess the power over the seasons and elements—and to summon, at their will, the large-winged spirits, that walk to and fro across the earth, governing like dreams, with a vague and unpenetrated power, the destinies of Nations, and the ambition of Kings.

There was born to this imperial race a son, to whom seer and king alike foretold a strange and preternatural destiny. His childhood itself was of a silent, stern, and contemplative nature. And his learning, even in his boyish youth, had ransacked all that the gray priests could teach him.

But the passions are interwoven deeply with the elements of thought. What man earns real wisdom but by the process of fierce emotion?—And amidst all the pursuits of his aspiring mind, the heart of the young prince burned with a thousand passions untold and unregulated. The Magician paused for a moment, and then, in a voice far different from the cold and solemn tone in which his accents were usually clothed, he broke forth:—

Oh, beautiful, beyond the beauty of these sick-limed and hoary times, was the beauty of Woman in the young world!—The glory of Eden was not yet departed from her face, and the lustre of unwearyed Nature glowed alike upon Earth and Earth's majestic daughters. Beauty is youth's Idol—and in the breast of Gondorah, for so was the Prince popularly called, (his higher and mystic titles may not be revealed,) the great passion—the great yearning—the great desire—was for the lovely and the august—whatever their shapes or mould. Not in woman only, but in all things, the Beautiful made his worship—wherever he beheld it, the image of the Deity was glassed to his adoring soul. But to him—or rather to myself—for I—(if memory retains identity through the shift and lapse of worlds; making *me*, the same as one who utterly dissimilar, lived a man amongst men, long ages back)—to me, there was yet a fiercer and more absorbing passion—than love, or the idolatry of Nature—THE DESIRE TO KNOW!—My mind launched itself into the depth of things—I loved step after step to trace Effect to its first Cause. Reason was a chain from heaven to earth, and every link led me to aspire to the stars themselves. And the wisdom of my wise fathers was mine; I knew the secret of the elements, and could charm them into slumber, or arouse them to war. The mysteries of that dread Chemistry which is now among the Sciences that sleep—by which we can command the air and walk on its viewless paths—by which we can wake the thunder—and summon the cloud—and rive the earth—the exer-

cise of that high faculty—the imagining Power—by which Fancy itself *creates* what it *wills*, and which, trained and exercised, can wake the spectres of the dead—and bring visible to the carnal eye the Genii that walk the world—the watchful, straining, sleepless science, that can make a Sage's volume of the stars—these were mine, and yet I murmured—I repined!—what mysteries were yet to know! The acquisition of to-day was but the disappointment of the morrow, and the dispensation of my ambition—was—to *desire*.

It was the evening, and I went from the groves of the sacred temple, to visit one whom I loved. The way spread over black and rugged masses of rock, amidst which, the wild shrub and dark weed sprung rife and verdant; for the waste as yet was eloquent of some great revulsion of the soil in the earlier epochs of the world—when Change often trod on the heels of Change, and the earth was scarcely reconciled to the sameness of her calm career. And I stood beneath the tree where she was to meet me—and my heart leapt within me as I saw her footsteps bounding along—and she came with her sweet lips breathing the welcome of human love, and I laid my head on her bosom and was content.

And, “Oh,” said she, “art thou not proud of thy dawning fame? The Seers speak of thee with wonder, and the Priests bow their heads before thy name.”

Then the passion of my soul broke forth, and I answered,—“What is this petty power that I possess, and what this barren knowledge? The Great

Arch Secret of all, I have toiled night after night to conquer and I cannot attain it. What is it to command even the dark spirits at war with Heaven—if we know not the nature of what we command? What I desire is not knowledge, but *the source* of knowledge. I wish that my eye should penetrate at once into the germ and cause of things; and that when I look upon the outward beauty of the world, my sight may pierce within, and see the mechanism that causes and generates the beauty working beneath. Enough of my art have I learned to know that there is a film over human eyes which prevents their penetrating beyond the surface; it is to remove that film, and dart into the essence, and the One Great Productive Spirit of all Things, that I labour and yearn in vain. All other knowledge is a cheat; this is the high prerogative which mocks at conjecture and equals us with a God!"

Then Lyciah saw that I was moved, and she kissed me, and sung me the sweet songs, that steeped my heart, as it were, in a bath of fragrant herbs.

Midnight had crept over the earth as I returned homeward across that savage scene. Rock heaped upon rock bordered and broke upon the lonely valley that I crossed—and the moon was still, and shining, as at this hour, when its life is four thousand years nearer to its doom. Then suddenly I saw moving before me, with a tremulous motion, a meteoric fire of an exceeding brightness. Ever as it moved above the seared and sterile soil, it soared and darted restlessly to and fro;—and I thought,

as it danced and quivered, that I heard it laugh from its burning centre with a wild and frantic joy. I fancied, as I gazed upon the fire, that in that shape revelled one of the children of the Elementary Genii; and, addressing it in their language, I bade it assume a palpable form. But the Fire darted on unheeding, save that now the laugh from amidst the flame came all distinct and fearfully on my ear. Then my hair stood erect—and my veins curdled—and my knees knocked together;—I was under the influence of an *Awe*; for I felt that the Power was not of the world—nor of that which my ancestral knowledge of the power of other worlds had yet pierced. My voice faltered, and thrice I strove to speak to the Light—but in vain; and when at length I addressed it in the solemn adjuration by which the sternest of the Fiends are bound, the Fire sprang up from the soil—towering aloof and aloft—with a livid but glorious lustre, bathing the whole atmosphere in its glare,—quenching, with an intenser ray, the splendours of the Moon,—and losing its giant crest in the far Invisible of Heaven!

And a voice came forth, saying—“Thou callest upon inferior Spirits; I am that which thou hast pined to behold—I am ‘The Living Principle of the World!’”

I bowed my face, and covered it with my hands, and my voice left me; and when again I looked up, behold, the Fire had shrunk from its momentary height, and was (now dwarfed and humble) creeping before me in its wavering and snake-like course. But fear was on me, and I fled, and fast

fled the Fire by my side; and oft, but faint, from its ghastly heart came the laugh that thrilled the marrow of my bones. And the waste was past, and the Giant Temple of the one God rose before me; I rushed forward, and fell breathless by its silent Altar. And there sat the High Priest, for night and day some one of the Sacred Host sat by the Altar; and he was of a great age, and all human emotion had left his veins; but even he was struck with my fear, and gazed upon me with his rayless eyes, and bade me be of cheer, for the place was holy. I looked round and the Fire was not visible, and I breathed freely; but I answered not the Priest, for years had dulled him into stone, and when I rose his eye followed me not. I gained the purple halls set apart for the King's son. And the pillars were of ivory inlaid with gold—and the gems and perfumes of the world gave light and fragrance to those wondrous courts; and the gorgeous banquet was spread, and music from unseen hands swelled along arch and aisle as I trod the royal Hall. But lo! by my Throne, crouching beneath the purpureal canopy, I saw the laughing Fire—and it seemed, lowly and paled, to implore protection. And I paused, and took the courtiers aside, and I asked them to mark the flame; but they saw it not—it burnt to mine eye alone. Then knew I that it was, indeed, a Spirit of that high race, which, even when they take visible form, are not visible save to the students of the Dread Science! And I trembled but revered.

And the Fire stayed by me night and day, and I grew accustomed to its light. But never, by

charm or spell, could I draw farther word from it; and it followed my steps with a silent and patient homage. And by degrees a vain and proud delight came over me to think that I was so honoured; and I looked upon the pale and changeful face of the Fire as the face of a friend.

There was a man who had told years beyond the memory of the living—a renowned and famous Seer—to whom, in times of dread and omen, our Priests and Monarchs themselves repaired for warning and advice. I sought his abode. The seer was not of our race—he came from the distant waters of the Nile, and the dark mysteries of the City of Egypt had girded his youth. It was in this cavern in which, young stranger of the North, this tale is now poured into thine ear, that the Seer held his glittering home—for lamp upon lamp then lighted up, from an unfailing naptha, these dazzling spars—and the seamen of the vessels that crowded yonder bay beheld, far down the blue waters, when on their various cruise, the nightly blaze flickering along the wave, and reminding the reverent mariner of many an awful legend of the Cavern Home. And hither had often turned my young feet in my first boyhood, and from the shrivelled lip of the old Egyptian had much of my loftiest learning been gleaned; for he loved me—and seeing with a prophet eye far down the great depths of Time, he knew, that I was fated to wild and fearful destinies, and a life surpassing the period of his own.

It was on that night, when the New Moon scatters its rank and noxious influence over the foliage

and life of earth, that I sought the Egyptian. And the Fire burned with a fiercer and redder light than its wont, as it played and darted by my side. And when, winding by the silver sands, I passed into the entrance of the Cave, I saw the old man sitting on a stone. And when I entered, the Seer started from his seat in fear and terror—his eyes rolled—his thin gray hairs stood erect—a cold sweat broke from his brow—and the dread master stood before his pupil in agony and awe.

"Thou comest," muttered he with white lips. "What is by thy side? hast thou dared to seek knowledge with the Soul of all Horror—with the ghastly Leper of—— Avaunt! bid the fiend begone!"

His voice seemed to leave the old man, and with a shriek he fell upon his face on the ground.

"Is it," said I, appalled by his terror—"is it the Fire that haunts my steps at which thou tremblest? behold, it is harmless as a dog; it burns not while it shines; if a fiend, it is a merry fiend, for I hear it laugh while I speak. But it is for this, Dread Sire, that I have sought thee. Canst thou tell me the nature of the Spirit—for a Spirit it surely is? Canst thou tell me its end and aim?"

I lifted the old man from the earth—and his kindly heart returned to him—and he took the Wizard Crown from the wall, and he placed it on his brows—for he was as a Monarch among the Things that are not of clay. And he said to the Fire—"Approach!" And the Fire glided to his knees. And he said, "Art thou the Spirit of the Element, and is thy home in the Flint's heart?"

And a voice from the flame answered, "No."

And again the Egyptian trembled.

"What art thou, then?" said he.

And the Fire answered, "Thy Lord."

And the limbs of the Egyptian shook as with the grasp of death.

And he said, "Art thou a demon of *this* world?"

And the Fire answered, "I am the Life of this world—and I am *not* of other worlds."

"I know thee—I fear thee—I acknowledge thee!" said the Wizard; "and in thy soft lap shall this crowned head soon be laid."

"And the Fire laughed.

"But tell me," said I,—for though my blood stood still my soul was brave and stern—"Tell me, O Sire, what hath this Thing with me!"

"It is the Great Ancestor of us all!" said the Egyptian, groaning.

"And knows it the Secrets of the Past?"

"The Secrets of the Past are locked within it."

"Can it teach me that which I pine to know?—Can it teach me the essence of things—the nature of all I see?—Can it raise the film from my human eyes?"

"Rash Prince, be hushed!" cried the Egyptian, rising, and glaring upon me with his stony eye—"Seek not to know that which will curse thee with the knowledge. Ask not a power that would turn life into a living grave. All the lore that man ever knew is mine; but *that* secret have I shunned, and *that* power have I cast from me, as the shepherd casts the viper from his hand. Be still,

—be moderate—be wise. And bid me exorcise the Spirit that accosts thee from the Fire!”

“Can it teach me the arch mystery? When I gaze upon the herb or flower, can it gift my gaze with the power to pierce into the cause and workings of its life?”

“I can teach thee this,” said the Fire; and it rose higher, and burned fiercer, as it spake, till the lamps of naphtha paled before it.

“Then abide by me, O Spirit,” said I; “and let us not be severed.”

“Miserable boy,” cried the Egyptian; “was this, then, the strange and preternatural doom which my Art foresaw was to be thine, though it deciphered not its nature? Knowest thou that this Fire, so clear—so pure—so beautiful—is——”

“Beware!” cried the voice from the Fire; and the crest of the flame rose, as the crest of a serpent about to spring upon its prey.

“Thou awest me not,” said the Egyptian, though the blood fled from his shrivelled and tawny cheeks. “Thou art——”

“The Living principle of the world,” interrupted the voice.

“And thine other name?” cried the Egyptian.

“Thy Conqueror!” answered the voice; and straight as the answer went forth, the Egyptian fell blasted as by lightning, a corpse at my feet. The light of the Fire played with a blue and tremulous lustre upon the carcass, and presently I beheld by that light that the corpse was already passed into the loathsomeness of decay—the flesh was rotten from the bones—and the worm and the

creeping thing, that the rottenness generates, twined in the very jaws and temples of the Sage.

I sickened and gasped for breath. "Is this thy work, oh, fearful Fiend!" said I, shuddering. And the Fire, passing from the corpse, crept humbly to my feet—and its voice answered—"Whatever my power, it is thy slave!"

"Was that death thy work?" repeated my quivering lips.

"Thou knowest," answered the Fire, "that Death is not the will of any Power—save one. The Death came from His will—and I but exulted over the blow!"

I left the cavern; my art, subtle as it was, gave me no glimpse into the causes of the Egyptian's death. I looked upon the Fire, as it crept along the herbage; with an inquisitive, yet dreading eye. I felt an awe of the Demon's power; and yet the proud transport I had known in the subjection of that power was increased, and I walked with a lofty step at the thought that I should have so magnificent a slave. But the words of the mysterious Egyptian still rang in my ears—still I shuddered and recoiled before his denunciation of the power and the secret I desired. And the voice of the Fire now addressed me (as I passed along the starry solitude) with a persuasive and sweet tone. "Shrink not, young Sage," it said, or rather sang, "from a power beyond that of which thy wisest ancestors ever dreamed—lose not thy valour at the drivelling whispers of age—when did ever age approve what youth desires? Thou art formed for the destiny which belongs

to royal hearts—the destiny courts thee. Why dost thou play the laggard?”

“Knowledge,” said I, musingly, “can never be productive of wo. If it be knowledge thou canst give me, I will not shrink.”

The Fire played cheerily to and fro. And from the midst of it there stepped forth a pale and shadowy form, of female shape and of exceeding beauty; her face was indeed of no living wanness, and the limbs were indistinct, and no roundness in their vapoury robes; but the features were lovely as a dream, and long yellow hair—glowing as sun-light fell adown her neck. “Thou wouldst pierce,” said she, “to the Principle of the World. Thou wouldst that thine eye should penetrate into my fair and most mystic dominion. But not yet; there is an ordeal to pass. To the Whole Knowledge thou must glide through the Imperfect!” Then the female kissed my eyes, and vanished, and with it vanished also the Fire.

Oh, beautiful!—Oh, wondrous!—Oh, divine! A scale had fallen from my sight—and a marvellous glory was called forth upon the face of earth. I saw millions and millions of spirits shooting to and fro athwart the air—spirits that my magic had yet never descried—spirits of rainbow hues, and quivering with the joy that made their nature. Wherever I cast my eye, life upon life was visible. Every blade of grass swarmed with worlds invisible to the naked eye—but performing with mimic regularity all the courses of the human race; every grain of dust, every drop of water, was a universe—mapped into a thousand tribes,

all fulfilling the great destinies of Mortality—Love—Fear—Hope—Emulation—Avarice—Jealousy—War—Death. My eyes had been touched with a glorious charm. And even in that, which to the casual eye would have been a mute, and solitary, and breathless hour, I was suddenly summoned into a dazzling atmosphere of life—every atom a world. And, bending my eyes below, I saw, emerging from the tiny hollows of the earth, those fantastic and elfin shapes that have been chiefly consecrated by your Northern Bards: forth they came, merrily—merrily—dancing in the smooth sheen of the silent heavens, and chasing the swift-winged creatures, that scarcely the glass of science can give to the eye. If all around was life, it was the life of enchantment and harmony—a subtle, pervading element of delight. Speech left me for very joy, and I gazed, thrilled and breathless, around me—entered, as it were, into the Inner Temples of the Great System of the Universe.

I looked round for the Fire—it was gone. I was alone amidst this new and populous creation, and I stretched myself voluptuously beneath a tree, to sate myself with wonder. As a Poet in the height of his delirium, was my rapture—for my veins were filled with Poesy, which is Intoxication—and my eyes had been touched with Poesy, which is the Creative Power—and the miracles before me were Poesy, which is the Enchanter's Wand.

Days passed, and the bright Demon which had so gifted me appeared not, nor yet did the spell

cease; but every hour, every moment, new marvels rose. I could not walk—I could not touch stone or herb, without coming into a new realm utterly different from those I had yet seen, but equally filled with life—so that there was never a want of novelty; and had I been doomed to pass my whole existence upon three feet of earth, I might have spent that existence in perpetual variety—in unsatisfied and eternally new research.—But most of all, when I sought Lyciah I felt the full gift I possessed; for in conversing with her my sense penetrated to her heart, and I felt, as with a magnetic sympathy, moving through its transparent purity, the thoughts and emotions that were all my own.

By degrees I longed, indeed, to make her a sharer in my discovered realms; for I now slowly began to feel the weariness of a conqueror who reigns alone—none to share my power or partake the magnificence in which I dwelt.

One day, even in the midst of angelic things that floated blissfully round me—so that I heard the low melodies they hymned as they wheeled aloft—one day this pining, this sense of solitude in life—of satiety in glory—came on me. And I said, “But this is the imperfect state; why not enjoy the whole? Could I ascend to that high and empyreal Knowledge, to which this is but a step, doubtless this dissatisfied sentiment would vanish; discontent arises because there is something still to attain; attain all, and discontent must cease. Bright Spirit,” cried I aloud, “to whom I already owe so great a benefit, come to me now—why

hast thou left me? Come and complete thy gifts. I see yet only the wonders of the secret portions of the world—touch mine eyes that I may see *the cause* of the wonders. I am surrounded with an air of life; let me pierce into the principle of that life. Bright Spirit, minister to thy servant!" Then I heard the sweet voice that had spoken in the Fire—but I saw not the Fire itself. And the voice said unto me—

"Son of the Wise Kings, I am here!"

"I see thee not," said I. "Why hidest thou thy lustre?"

"Thou seest the Half, and that very sight blinds thee to the Whole. This redundance and flow of life gushes from me as from its source. When the mid-course of the River is seen, who sees also its distant spring? In thee, not myself, is the cause that thou beholdest me not. I am as I was when I bowed my crest to thy feet; but thine eyes are not what then they were!"

"Thou tellest me strange things, O Demon!" said I; "for why, when admitted to a clearer sight of things, should my eyes be darkened alone when they turn to thee?"

"Does not all knowledge, save the one right knowledge, only lead men from the discovery of the Primal Causes. As Imagination may soar aloft, and find new worlds, yet lose the solid truth—so thou mayest rise into the regions of a preternatural lore, yet recede darklier and darklier from the clew to Nature herself."

I mused over the words of the Spirit, but their sense seemed dim.

"Canst thou not appear to me in thine old, wan, and undulating brightness?" said I, after a pause.

"Not until thine eyes receive power to behold me."

"And when may I be worthy that power?"

"When thou art thoroughly dissatisfied with thy present gifts."

"Dread Demon, I am so now!"

"Wilt thou pass from this pleasant state at a hazard,—not knowing that which may ensue. Behold, all around thee is full of glory, and musical with joy! Wilt thou abandon that state for a dark and perilous Unknown?"

"The Unknown is the passion of him who aspires to know."

"Pause; for it is a dread alternative," said the Invisible.

"My heart beats steadily. Come,—mine be the penalty of the desire!"

"Thy wish is granted," said the Spirit.

Then straightway a pang, quick, sharp, agonizing, shot through my heart. I felt the stream in my veins stand still, hardening into a congealed substance: my throat rattled; I struggled against the grasp of some iron power. A terrible sense of my own impotence seized me—my muscles refused—my will, my voice, fled—I was in the possession of some authority that had entered, and claimed, and usurped the citadel of mine own self. Then came a creeping of the flesh, a deadly sensation of ice and utter coldness; and, lastly, a blackness, deep and solid as a mass of rock, fell over the whole Earth—I had entered DEATH!

From this state I was roused by the voice of the Demon. "Awake, look forth!—Thou hast thy desire!—Abide the penalty!" The darkness broke from the earth; the ice thawed from my veins; once more my senses were my servants.

I looked, and behold I stood on the same spot, but how changed! The earth was one blue and crawling mass of putridity; its rich verdure, its lofty trees, its sublime mountains, its glancing waters, had all been the deceit of my previous blindness; the very green of the grass and the trees was rottenness, and the leaves (not each leaf one and inanimate as they seemed to the common eye) were composed of myriads of insects and puny reptiles, battered on the corruption from which they sprang. The waters swarmed with a leprous life—those beautiful shapes that I had seen in my late delusion were corrupt in their several parts, and from that corruption other creatures were generated living upon them. Every breath of air was not air, a thin and healthful fluid, but a wave of animalculæ, poisonous and fetid; (for the Air is the Arch Corruptor, hence, all who breathe die; it is the slow sure venom of Nature, pervading and rotting all things;) the light of the heavens was the sickly, loathsome glare that steamed from the universal Death in Life. The tiniest thing that moved—you beheld the decay moving through its veins, and that its corruption, unconscious to itself, engendered new tribes of life! The World was one dead carcass, from which every thing the World bore took its being. There was not such a thing as beauty!—there was

not such a thing as life that did not generate from its own corruption a loathsome life for others! I looked down upon myself, and saw that my very veins swarmed with a mote-like creation of shapes, springing into hideous existence from mine own disease, and mocking the Human Destiny with the same career of love, life, and death. Methought it must be a spell, that change of scene would change. I shut my eyes with a frantic horror, and I fled, fast, fast, but blinded; and ever as I fled a low laugh rang in my ears, and I stopped not till I was at the feet of Lyciah, for she was my first involuntary thought. Whenever a care or fear possessed me, I had been wont to fly to her bosom, and charm my heart by the magic of her sweet voice. I was at the feet of Lyciah—I clasped her knees—I looked up imploringly into her face—Spirit of my Fathers! the same curse attended me still! Her beauty was gone. There was no whole,—no one life in that Being whom I had so adored. Her life was composed of a million lives. Her stately shape, of atoms crumbling from each other, and so bringing about the ghastly state of corruption which reigned in all else around. Her delicate hues; her raven hair, her fragrant lips—Pah!—What, what was my agony! —I turned from her again,—I shrank in loathing from her embrace,—I fled once more,—on—on. I ascended a mountain, and looked down on the various leprosies of Earth. Sternly I forced myself to the task; sternly I inhaled the knowledge I had sought; sternly I drank in the horrible penalty I had dared.

"Demon," I cried, "appear, and receive my curse!"

"Lo, I am by thy side evermore," said the voice. Then I gazed, and saw the Fire was by my side; and I saw that it was the vivid light that the jaws of Rottenness emits; and in the midst of the light, which was as its shroud and garment, stood a Giant Shape—that was the shape of a Corpse that had been for months buried. I gazed upon the Demon with an appalled yet unquailing eye, and, as I gazed, I recognised in those ghastly lineaments a resemblance to the Female Spirit that had granted me the first fatal gift. But exaggerated, enlarged, dead,—Beauty rotted into horror.

"I am that which thou didst ask to see face to face.—I am the Principle of Life."

"Of Life! Out, horrible mocker!—hast thou no other name?"

"I have! and the other name is CORRUPTION!"

"Bright Lamps of Heaven," I cried, lifting my eyes in anguish from the loathly Charnel of the Universal Earth; and is this, which men call 'Nature,' is this the sole Principle of the World?"

As I spoke, the huge carcass beneath my feet trembled.—And over the face of the Corpse beside me there fell a fear. And lo! the heavens were lit up with a pure and glorious light, and from the midst of them there came forth a Voice, which rolled slowly over the whole face of the charnel earth, as the voice of thunder above the valley of the shepherd. "SUCH," said the Voice, "IS NATURE, IF THOU ACCEPTEST NATURE AS THE FIRST CAUSE—SUCH IS THE UNIVERSE WITHOUT A GOD!"

CHAPTER VII.

The Cavern Scene with Kosem Kesamim continued—The gigantic Apparition—Its Dialogue with Kosem Kesamim—The Alternative offered me—My Decision—The Invocation to Sleep—The change of Scene—London once more—Comparison between the Gaiety of London and that of Paris—The former vindicated—News—Elections—Theatres—Mr. Monck Mason, and his Opera—Applauded Mediocrity a sign of the Degradation of the Art in which it is displayed—Excellence and Abuse of it inseparable—A Walk in the Streets—Oratorical Panegyric on London—The Virtues of Oxford Street—Vagrants, Wolves, and Vagabonds compared—Idleness, its good effects in the Established Church—Ministers and the Penny Magazine—Characters Sketched—The Man who has benefited by a Public School—The Generous Actress—The faithful Lover, and the Wisdom of Faithful Love—My Vindication of the Happiness of the Passion—Asmodeus replies by the Anecdote of the French Marquis—The Susceptibility to Ennui is the true Secret of an Active Mind—Pleasures enumerated, &c.

THE peculiar nature of my adventures under the auspices of Asmodeus is well adapted to the desultory manner in which their narrative appears, being, like the recital, constantly broken off, and changing from grave to gay,—from mystery to plain-dealing,—from the upper earth to its interior caverns,—with a rapidity which the long intervals in my narrative—gaps from month to month—

tend to soften;—fatiguing, may I trust, the reader somewhat less than they do the hero.

It will be remembered that I left off at that part of the Tale of Kosem Kesamim when a voice from Heaven had drawn the moral of Immortality from the terrors of Corruption.

While I was all eager and breathless to hear the remainder of this primeval and weird history, its thread was at this moment suddenly interrupted by a strange Apparition that appeared at the mouth of the cave. It was a female form, or rather likeness of a form, of exceeding height. The face was beautiful—but severe and fearful—and set, as it were, in a profound and death-like calm. It wore a pale, yet luminous diadem on its head, from which the locks, which were dark, parted in a regular and majestic flow. The diadem seemed wrought of light itself, impalpable and tremulous, and as the face—still and motionless in a stony repose—looked upon us, it recalled to me the images of those gigantic Sphinges whose likeness has outlived their worship; but yet the more did it recall to me some vague and inexpressible dreams, as of a countenance I had seen long years before, though not in my present state of existence,—a memory faint and confused, retained by the soul from the wrecks of a former being. And the figure of the female was not of flesh, but transparent and ethereal, so that the moon shone through its mist-like robes as through a shadow. And a voice broke from the lips of the female, though they stirred not the while, and thus it said:—

“ Mightiest of Earth’s Magicians! why revealest thou my secrets without mine expressed consent? Am I not the keeper of all mysteries?—is not my bosom the storehouse of all dark things? Why draggest thou to day the wrecks that have mouldered for ages in the dread Ocean, without homage done to me unto whom they belong?”

“ O Spirit of the Past!” answered Kosem Kesamim, “ whom now I see imbodied in this solitary and desert shore, where for forgotten centuries human footstep hath not trod—fit scene for thy echoless wanderings,—O Spirit of the Past! forgive me if I have erred. But thou—unearthly and passionless—knowest not the blessing felt by a human breast in confiding its memories to another.”

“ That,” answered the Past, “ is a poor and unworthy sentiment, meet for the herd who share together their low sorrows and empty joys—but not for the lone and comradeless Lord of Nature—not for the Master of Magicians. But for thee, young Mortal, knowest thou that these secrets are the wages of death? None—save he by thy side—he who hath conquered death—can learn them and live. Wherefore, beware how thou listenest, and drinkest in with thine ears the poison of existence.”

Then I looked eagerly on the Wizard, and methought he seemed confused by the words of the Spirit; and, after a moment’s pause, he answered—

“ The Past speaketh truth. Oh, mortal! wilt thou be wise and die; or be as thy blinded brotherhood, and live?”

I can assure thee, O pleasant reader! that these words displeased me sorely; and I thought it marvellously unjust that tales which only send others to sleep, should consign me to the embraces of Sleep's less agreeable Sister.

"Kosem Kesamim," said I, very plainly, "I am exceedingly glad thou hast given me the option before it was too late for a choice; and great is my obligation to this beautiful Lady for her timely announcement of the consequences of acquiring information. With your good leave, therefore, I will, for the present, decide upon ignorance and a reasonable length of life—and when my youth is fairly gone, and the golden bowl of enjoyment runs low towards the dregs, I shall be very happy to reverse my choice—and exchange the sunless days of old age for the Knowledge thou canst bestow,—at present—Love—Adventure—and Amusement, suffice for thy unambitious Servant."

"Thou hast judged as common men judge," answered Kesamim, coldly—but a ray of living fire flashed from his shadowy and indistinguishable features. "And thou hast shut against thyself the gates of my Domain." Then—lifting up his arms—he continued in a low and exceedingly soft tone—"O thou mystic and lulling Ether, that pervadest the World of Night—circumfusing the Earth with a secret and sweet power—from the core of the wearied flowers to the restless hearts of men, thy influence extends,—arresting life only to renew it! Solemn and Holy Sleep, come hither—and lock within thy dewy and tender arms the soul of

thy subject here! For *me*—thou art not. As the stream dashes on night and day—as the fire which the Moon quells not in the breast of the Volcano—thy spirit hath no mastery over mine.”

As Kosem thus spoke, and while his last words thrilled like a distant song in my ears, slumber came upon me. The cave, the Magician, faded from my view. I was alone with Sleep.

I woke with a singular sense of feebleness and exhaustion, and turning my dizzy eyes—beheld the walls and furniture of my own chamber in London. Asmodeus was seated by my side, reading a Sunday Newspaper—his favourite reading.

“Ah!” said I, stretching myself with so great an earnestness, that I believed at first my stature had been increased by the malice of the Wizard, and that I stretched from one end of the room to the other—“Ah! dear Asmodeus, how pleasant it is to find myself on earth again! After all, these romantic wonders only do for a short time. Nothing like London when one has been absent from it upon a Syntax search after the Picturesque!”

“London is, indeed, a charming place,” said the Devil—“all our fraternity are very fond of it—it is the custom for the Parisians to call it dull. What an instance of the vanity of patriotism—there is vice enough in it to make any reasonable man cheerful.”

“Yes; the gaiety of Paris is really a delusion. How poor its shops—how paltry its equipages—how listless its crowds—compared with those of London! If it was only for the pain in walking their accursed stones, sloping down to a river in

the middle of the street—all sense of idle enjoyment would be spoilt. But in London—‘the hum, the stir, the din of Men’—the activity and flush of life every where—the brilliant shops—the various equipages—the signs of luxury, wealth, restlessness, that meet you on all sides—give a much more healthful and vigorous bound to the spirits, than the indolent loungers of the Tuileries, spelling a thrice-read French Paper which contains nothing, or sitting on chairs by the hour together, unwilling to stir because they have paid a penny for the seat—ever enjoy. O! if London would seem gay after Paris, how much more so after a visit to the interior of the Earth. And what is the news, my Asmodeus?”

“O, still the same—Elections every where. Men are choosing representatives of their good qualities—viz., their fine opinions. What a pity they cannot choose representatives of their bad qualities—viz. their unprincipled actions.”

“And so they do,” said I, very tartly. “The Tories do! (if what you told me, when I last saw you at Kosem Kesamim’s, be true.) See them threatening here and bribing there. The Marquis of Salisbury turning out his tenants because they presume to dislike over-taxation—and Sir Roger Gresley assuring the world in an address that the sinews of war—*id est*, the corrupting exercise of extravagance—shall not be wanting to his return for Derbyshire. What are the Members returned by the Dukes of Newcastle and the Lords of Exeter, but representatives not of Men’s fine opinions, but their unprincipled actions?”

"I never dispute,"—replied Asmodeus—"and I don't value myself on the truth of my statements—'tis not the fashion below. Let us change the subject. The Theatres have re-opened. Apropos of them—I will tell you a fine instance of the futility of human ambition. Mr. Monck Mason took the King's Theatre, saith Report—(which is the Creed of Devils)—in order to bring out an opera of his own, which Mr. Laporte, with a very uncourteous discretion, had thought fit to refuse. The Season passes—and Mr. Monck Mason has ruined himself without being able to bring out his opera after all! What a type of speculation. A Speculator is one who puts a needle in a hay-stack, and then burns all his hay without finding the needle. It is hard to pay too dear for one's whistle—but still more hard if one never plays a tune on the whistle one pays for. Still the world has lost a grand pleasure in not seeing damned an Opera written by the Manager of the Opera-House,—it would have been such a consolation to all the Rejected Operatives—it would have been the prettiest hardship entailed on a great man ever since the time of that Speaker who was forced himself to put the question whether he had been guilty of bribery, and should be expelled the House, and had the pleasure of hearing the Ayes predominate. *Je me mêle* with the affairs of the Theatre—they are in my diabolic province, you know. But if the stage be the fosterer of Vice, as you know it is said, Vice just at this moment in England has very unattractive colours."

"Ah, wait till we break the Monopoly. But even now have we not the 'Hunchback?'"

“Yes; the incarnation of the golden mediocré: a stronger proof, by the hyperbolic praise it receives, of the decline of the Drama than even the abundance of trash from which it gleams. Any thing at all decent from a new Dramatic Author will obtain success far more easily than much higher merit in another line; literary rivalry not having yet been directed much towards the Stage, there are not literary jealousies resolved and united against a Dramatist’s as against a Poet’s or a Novelist’s success. Every one can praise those pretensions, however humble, which do not interfere with his own.”

“It is very true; there is never any very great merit, at least, in a new Author, when you don’t hear the abuse louder than the admiration. And now, Asmodeus, with your leave, I will prepare for breakfast, and our morning’s walk.”

“O, dear, dear London, dear even in October! Regent-street, I salute you!—Bond-street, my good fellow, how are you? And you, O beloved Oxford-street! whom the ‘Opium Eater’ called ‘stony-hearted,’ and whom I, eating no opium, and speaking as I find, shall ever consider the most kindly and maternal of all streets—the street of the middle classes—busy without uproar, wealthy without ostentation. Ah, the pretty ankles that trip along thy pavement! Ah, the odd country cousin-bonnets that peer into thy windows, which are lined with cheap yellow shawls, price £1 4s. marked in the corner! Ah, the brisk young lawyers flocking from their quarters at the back of Holborn! Ah, the quiet old ladies, living in Duchess-street, and

visiting thee with their eldest daughters in the hope of a bargain! Ah, the bumpkins from Norfolk just disgorged by the Bull and Mouth—the soldiers—the milliners—the Frenchmen—the swindlers, the porters with four-post beds on their back, who add the excitement of danger to that of amusement! The various, shifting, motley group, that belong to Oxford-street, and Oxford-street alone. What thoroughfares equal thee in variety of human specimens! in the choice of objects, for remark, satire, admiration! Beside thee, other streets seem chalked out for a sect,—narrow-minded and devoted to a *cotêrîe*. Thou alone art Catholic—all receiving. Regent-street belongs to foreigners, cigars, and ladies in red silk, whose characters are above scandal. Bond-street belongs to dandies and picture-buyers. St. James' to club-loungers, and young men in the Guards, with mustachios properly blackened by the *cire* of Mr. Delcroix; but thou, Oxford-street, what class can especially claim thee as its own? Thou mockest at oligarchies; thou knowest nothing of select orders! Thou art liberal as air—a chartered Libertine; accepting the homage of all, and retaining the stamp of none. And to call *thee* stony-hearted!—certainly thou art so to Beggars—to people who have not the WHEREWITHAL; but thou wouldst not be so respectable if thou wert not capable of a certain reserve to paupers. Thou art civil enough, in all conscience, to those who have a shilling in their pocket;—those who have not, why do they live at all?"

"That's not exactly what surprises me," said

Asmodeus;—"I don't wonder *why* they live, but *where* they live: for I perceive Boards in every Parish proclaiming that no Vagrant—that is, no person who is too poor to pay for his lodging—will be permitted to stay there. Where then does he stay?—every Parish unites against him—not a spot of ground is lawful for him to stand on. At length he is passed on to his own parish; the meaning of which is, that, not finding a decent livelihood in one place, the laws prevent his seeking it at any other. By the way, it would not be a bad plan to substitute a Vagrant for a Fox, and to hunt him regularly, you might hunt him with a pack of respectable persons, belonging to the middle class, and eat him when he's caught. That would be the shortest way to get rid of the race. You might proclaim a reward for every Vagrant's head: it would gain the King more honour with the rate-payers than clearing the country of wolves won to his predecessor. What wolf eats so much as a Beggar? What wolf so troublesome, so famished, and so good for nothing? People are quite right in judging a man's virtue by his wealth; for when a man has not a shilling he soon grows a rogue. He must live on his wits, and a man's wits have no conscience when his stomach is empty. We are all very poor in Hell—very; if we were rich, Satan says, justly, that we should become idle. That's the reason, you know, according to Hume, that an Established Church is idle; you feed it up to the chin that it may go to sleep and do no mischief."

"None of your 'Slaps at the Church,' or the Publishers of the 'Penny Magazine' will be at you.'

"No; my 'slaps' give no information; their truth is too stale: but what a very droll thing it is in your Ministers to take up all other people for publishing a penny paper, and then to set up a penny paper themselves. One would think they were booksellers, and wanted the monopoly in the way of trade. They cry stinking fish, that they may hawk about their own haddock without rivalry: 'hey'll sell cheese and candles next on the same principle. But a truce to general observations, let us become personal. You see," continued Asmodeus, "that elderly gentleman crossing, with so musing an air, into Vere-street; his eyes bent on the ground, and his lips muttering as he goes. What think you, he is meditating?—No! you can never guess. He is an example of the education of a public school carried to its height, in order that you may then fairly judge of its utility in after life. In a word, that elderly Gentleman is making Latin Verses. It is the study, the occupation, the delight of his existence. His mind feeds upon longs and shorts, and never commits a greater inconstancy from its mistress than attempting a flirtation with Sapphics, or a tempting Alcaic. Ever since he left school he has so employed himself. He has large estates; he is of ancient birth. What are these to him? he knows nothing of the '*grata arva*,' except in an elegy, nor of the '*venerabile nomen*,' except as a very tag-ending, to be found in the *Gradus*. Immediately after breakfast he retires to his Library, and begins, perhaps, a Latin Epistle in imitation of Ovid; he corrects it in his walks, and copies it out fair after dinner. Business, pleasure, the pelting of the pitiless 'Re-

form,' the Bank Committee, the East India Charter, the indignation of the planters at robbing them of the fellow-creatures whom they have bought and paid for, break not on his dignified repose. New books he sneers at with a sarcastic quotation: he has heard of Scott, and has put him in a Poem in the vocative case of Scotus. Byron he considers unclassical, the rest of Authorship is a world unknown—'Shadows, clouds and darkness rest upon it.'

"If he had not been educated to this 'tenor of the mind,' you would say he was a monomaniac, and would hint at the skill of Sir George Tuthill. But how, as it is, can you blame him? nay, you must admire, you must revere. He is one among the few who fulfil, to the letter, the classical objects of your Universal Education. He was taught as a boy that Latin verses were the end and aim of human ambition,—he believes as a man what he was taught as a boy. Is not this exactly what education ought to accomplish?—to continue through maturity the studies of youth! Assuredly!—if the education of a Public School does not make a man write Latin verses all his life, it belies itself, and teaches nothing. Excellent old gentleman,—what a noble employment for a man of his years! With such an ear for a false quantity, his opinions must needs be prodigiously sound. What a pity that you have not more like him—and that your matured Etonians prefer deriving no profit at all from their education, than to study the useful art of linking dactyls and spondees—

"Ergo hominum genus incassum frustraue laboret—

Semper, et in curis consumit inanibus ævum—

"Why, what is this, Asmodeus?—only think of the Devil railing at verses, and quoting Lucretius!"

"Lucretius! Oh, he is our legitimate property!—the Monks consigned *him* to us long ago—because, being a Heathen, who wrote some sixty years before Christ, he did not write like a Christian. We have him below—safe and sound—a present from 'The Fathers.' But now turn to that handsome Lady of a certain age—she in the gray silk gown—who moves along with so jaunty and careless an air,—that is a lady who committed a very singular action. As there are persons with one idea—she is a person of one action. She is an actress of talent; a young gentleman, just of age, fell in love with her some years since. He went about asserting that she was the most virtuous, and, therefore, I need not add, the most calumniated woman in the world. 'Pleased, perhaps, with the youth and inexperience of her lover, the Actress resolved to prove herself deserving of the good opinion of her which he had thus innocently formed. She refused him, therefore, all connexion save that of the purest friendship; but, nevertheless, she did not scruple to receive the most splendid jewels—bank-notes—a house in town—carriage, &c. Alarmed at the news of this expensive connexion, the parents of this gentleman (he had inherited his property from an uncle) hurry to town—they endeavour to open his eyes—they fail. The lady opens them herself. Among his other imprudences, our young heir takes to races and gambling. He becomes seriously embarrassed—ruin stares him in the face—he throws his af-

fairs into the hands of his guardians in despair. At this time he receives the following letter from the Actress:—

‘My dear young Friend,—I have been charmed with your inexperience, and I am now about to give you wisdom. I am all that the world says I am, and what you assert I am not. But I am agreeable, good-natured, and generous, as a set-off to my errors, and to my greatest error of all—my approach to my thirty-fifth year. Your relations are angry—your property is involved—you want money—and your guardians are cursing the artful minx on whom you lavished so much; I drop them my best stage courtesy for their good opinion. Accompanying this, you will receive all the jewels you have ever given me—the deeds of the house—all the bank-notes, carefully pinned together, in a blue silk bag, of which I make you a present. The carriage only I keep, because I don’t well see how in a gentlemanlike manner you could take it back again. Don’t be ashamed of receiving these. I only took them as a loan, laughing in my sleeve at you all the time, and because I knew that if your young feelings did not exhaust their folly upon me they would on somebody less disinterested. The time has now arrived when you want these trifles; there they are; if I kept them it would be like taking goods under false pretences. You gave them, believing me the reverse of what I am. Adieu! I would ask you to come and see me in my new part—but I think we had better separate for a year or two. Go abroad. Heaven bless you.

‘Yours, &c. —’”

"Did the young gentleman take back the effects?"

"He took the letter to his father to show him how wrongly he had abused the Actress—and the father working on his vanity made him see what a fool he had been. No, the son did not retain the presents, but the father did, and wrote the Actress a very polite letter of thanks. The young man went abroad, and is probably by this time as wise and as avaricious as his elders. You see how well on rare occasions a bad person can behave. It was vanity that made this woman love the *éclat* of seeming disinterested—and the very fact of being esteemed made her capable of being worthy of it. . . . But we have wandered too far up the street for characters,—we are just by Holborn—the shoal is lower down."

"Nay," said I, "look yonder; you see that thin, handsomish gentleman—in the blue coat—there is something remarkably pensive in his appearance. What and who is he?"

"A man who has just discovered that all the thoughts, hopes, and dreams of his youth were a delusion. He fell in love at twenty-three—the orthodox male age for the passion. His beloved was beautiful and devoted—they were exceedingly poor—they could not marry. He went to India; for fifteen years he toiled—he slaved—he braved the climate—he made money—and refusing all pleasure—denying himself all expense, he remained for ever faithful to his mistress, for ever pondering over her image. He returns to England—he hastens to his long-loved Isabel—he finds her——"

"Dead?"

"No, indeed!"

"Married?"

"Much worse than either. Alive and single—and not so much changed by Time as he might reasonably have expected. He is enchanted, he proposes, he marries, and finds his ideal of his dreams, the goddess of his youth, a cross fiery shrew, who leads him the life of a dog. So much for the sense of early attachments, and the wisdom of undying constancy; and yet you poetical mortals *will* go on preaching up the beautiful notion of two people who know nothing of each other, except that they are young, fond, and handsome, moping away their better days, in order to obtain at last that disappointment which, in nine cases out of ten, will follow their marriage—as it follows the marriage of much wiser people than they."

"Ah! Asmodeus," said I, "rail not at the mysteries of the divine passion. Constancy has great charms, very great, especially in one's mistress to oneself. *Vice versâ*, it is certainly attended with ennui. But to tell you the truth, Asmodeus, I am inclined to believe, that, notwithstanding all its delusions and deceits, a real honest and passionate love, if one could possibly procure such a thing, does more to dissipate the time agreeably than at least any other *innocent amusement*."

"It was under the same idea," said Asmodeus, "that a friend of mine, a French Marquis, accepted the invitation of a Provincial Noble, who had a large family of grown-up daughters—mind that!—to spend some time at his country-house. The Marquis was known to be one of the most fastidious and difficult of the metropolitan *elegants*. His host, when they were travelling down together,

began to consider with himself how his guest was to be amused.

'We have excellent fishing in our river,' said he, 'and of a warm day we'll make parties; and while we boat on the river, tents shall be spread for us, and refreshments prepared among the woods. Quite a Boccaccio scene it will be!'

'Ah! excuse me,' said the Marquis with a shiver, "I never fish. Boating and tents! Oh! you little know my delicate constitution.'

'You hunt, at least, Marquis?'

'Never!' was the emphatic reply.

'Shoot?'

'Shoot—No! *mon cher*.'

'Play at billiards?'

'Not a stroke!'

'At cards?'

'Never touch them!'

'Well, well,' said the host, considerably alarmed—'thank heaven, we have an excellent library.'

'Library! Do I look like a man who reads books?'

'What then, *will* you do to amuse yourself?'

'I, my dear friend? Oh, don't trouble yourself about me. I shall give myself up altogether to *seduction*!'

"Agreeable intelligence to a *pere de famille*. But, seriously, I have a great mind to fall in love. If you were half such a devil as Mephistopheles, you would find me out some gentle Margaret or another, beautiful, amiable—a sort of thing one could marry!"

"Marry! What are you about? Can you meditate such a design?"

"Why not?"

"Oh! there, then, we part for ever. Marriage either gets rid of your devils by the presence of an angel—e-hem! there's a pretty play upon words—or else it supplies their place with one whose name is Legion."

"Pooh!—nonsense! None of your old cant maxims about marriage. I know them all by heart—either the extreme of misery or bliss!—as if life had any extremes at all for more than a quarter of an hour together. Depend upon it, marriage is nothing one way or the other—as they say of a parrot's life in a cage—when one's used to it. Therefore, oh Devil! I give you fair notice that I intend to fall in love; and I expect, through your aid, to have some very wild and piquant adventures in the course of my folly."

Asmodeus bowed; and, as we were now in Regent Street, stepped into Verey's for a glass of ice. I followed his example.

I know not how it is, but my frame is one peculiarly susceptible to ennui. There's no man so instantaneously bored. What activity does this singular constitution in all cases produce! All who are sensitive to ennui do eight times the work of a sleek, contented man. Any thing but a large chair by the fire-side, and a family circle! Oh! the bore of going every day over the same exhausted subjects, to the same dull persons of respectability; yet that is the doom of all domesticity. Then *pleasure*! A wretched play—a hot opera, under the ghostly fathership of Mr. Monck Mason—a dinner of sixteen, with such silence or *such* conversation!—a water-party to Richmond, to catch cold and drink bad sauterne—a flirtation,

which fills all your friends with alarm, and your writing-desk with love-letters you don't like to burn, and are afraid of being seen; nay, published, perhaps, one fine day, that you may go by some d—d pet name ever afterwards!—hunting in a thick mist—shooting in furze bushes, that “feelingly persuade you what you are”—“the bowl,” as the poets call the bottles of claret that never warm you, but whose thin stream, like the immortal river,—

“Flows, and as it flows, for ever may flow on;”

or the Port that warms you, indeed; yes, into a bilious headache and low fever. Yet all these things are pleasures!—part of social enjoyment! They fill out the corners of the grand world—they inspire the minor's dreams—they pour crowds into St. James', Doctors' Commons, and Melton Mowbray—they——Oh! confound them all!—it bores one to write about them.

Only just returned to London, and, after so bright a panegyric on it, I already weary of the variety of its sameness. Shall I not risk the fate of Faust, and fall in love—ponderously and *bonâ fide*? Or shall I go among the shades of the deceased, and amuse myself with chatting to Dido and Julius Cæsar? Verily, reader, I leave you for the present to guess my determination. You see the courage I have displayed, and the countries I have visited, towards dispelling ennui. You may say that I could have chosen a more respectable companion than a Devil. My dear sir,—not if I had chosen from the higher classes, I assure you.

CHAPTER VIII.

Leisure—Montaigne's Character—An Egotistical Reverie—The Tacitus—The Pindar—The Apollo's Son—The Rosa Matilda, and the Plato of—THE KEEPSAKE!!!—Scott's Monument—The Duke of Buccleugh's Delicacy—New Edition of Byron—The Supplements to the Spectator—The Dramatic Committee—The Censor—Political Allusions on the Stage, their Expediency considered—Should Theatres be classified?—Mrs. Hall's Buccaneer—The Westminster Election—Mr. D'Israeli and Colonel Grey.

LITERARY ease!—what a sentiment of happiness—what a sense of quiet, of deep, of virtuous enjoyment is conveyed in that expression!—How many classical recollections throng around us, when we recall, in that one phrase, the *otium* and the *dignitas* of the wise of old!—Tivoli crowded with its white retreats—Baix and its Fountains—the Villa of Cicero—the Gardens of Pliny—the magnificent Palace of Lucullus, equally learned and voluptuous. Nor, for my own part, can I ever chew the cud of that delightful phrase without especially bringing to my mind's eye a certain antique and venerable chamber in one of the gray *Chateaux* of *Perigord*,—crowded with a medley of well-worn volumes—and the light that enters from one high window resting on the comely front of the Lord of Montaigne. That most persuasive gossip, who, among Essayists, is what *Le Sage* was among Novelists—wisest while most trifling—and

most brilliant when most at ease—seems, to my fancy, to have enjoyed the very ideal of a life of literary leisure. He had seen enough of the actual world to be contented with retirement; and his natural disposition, so remote from the dread hypochondriasm customary to men of letters, made Solitude the nurse no less of cheerful than of profound thoughts; the philosophy of a Happy Temper smoothed the pillow of disease, and kept—if I may use the term—the mental as the bodily veins, in a healthful and lively flow, so that he drank in the blessings of leisure without its ennui: and study never wearied him with a sense of its futility—nor solitude with that of its vegetative sameness. It has been my lot to cultivate letters from my earliest youth; but I have never attained to the leisure and the calm which should belong to the pursuit. At fits and starts I have heaped together what learning I possess; and, pardon me the vanity, before I was twenty, the elaborate Parr esteemed my correspondence as that of no ordinary bookman—but the wheel at my heart always forbade me rest—and the Passions hurried me from books to men—from study to pleasure—from contemplation to action—with so fierce and restless an alternation, that the life of ease—which I still covet—I have never, save at hasty and brief intervals, enjoyed. Sometimes, indeed, I charm myself with pictures of a future never likely to be mine—and imagine, that when the last days of my youth are over, and that tranquil period in which the Autumn of Life steals over its hot and laborious summer has cooled the pulses

which now beat too wildly for repose, some quiet retreat—the *rura et silentium*—among old books and green fields—may afford me the Utopia and the Euthanasia of literary life. Then, too, I charm myself with the hope of weaving slowly, and as a luxury, not a task, some such work as the world shall not willingly let die, and which may bind my name to something more solid than those reeds blown to and fro by the breath of popular opinion, which, as yet, are the only witness of what I am. But, as I have said, the chances are that such a future never will be reserved for fruition; my mind has exhausted my body, prematurely; and the grave, perhaps, already yawns for its prey; but the spirit that is within me will quail not to the last,—and the despondency of the nerves shall not dim the hope of the soul. O the bright power of endurance that the Great Heart can evoke from its own wrecks! Wisely did the ancients build up a temple to Fortitude—wisely has the Poet told us—

“To bear is to conquer our fate.”

Without courage there is no virtue—with courage we are the emperors of earth—and trample, with an angel's hope, upon the fiends of hell—

“Rex est qui metuit nihil;
Ex hoc Regnum sibi quisque dat!”*

If it has not often been my fate to take long draughts of that Pierian ease, which is the ordinary nectar of many of the cultivators of letters, the

* Seneca.

rareness of the luxury makes, perhaps, its excess; and now (as Asmodeus leaves me to myself, to pursue his own avocations in the fertile province of Amorous Intrigue, [which constitutes his proper domain,] marrying some and divorcing others) among my books and papers, "I crop my flowery food." I love, in these moments of literary relaxation, to blend every kind and order of literary work; through novels, essays, philosophy, politics, newspapers, pamphlets, annuals, I eat my way.

"All in a lonely study,
Where books are in great plenty,
A scholar can devour
More sensè in an hour
Than Brougham can talk in twenty.

In books of geography
He makes the maps to flutter;
A river or a sea
Are to him a dish of tea,
And a kingdom bread-and-butter."†

But above all my recent reading, commend me to that manual of the magnates that horn-book of the high-bred, which is bound in red silk, and styled "The Keepsake." I had just made the above exclamation when my friend M—— entered. Now, M—— is what is called a man of society. He is a table wit, and an oral critic, but he never writes. He is too clever for print, all his essence evaporates after the moment.

"I agree with you," said he; "commend me to 'The Keepsake.' It is admirable; the benevolence of the design is alone sufficient to render it

† Shenstone.

immortal. What a noble idea, to think of a nursery for the baby intellects of the Peerage! It is a great institution of charity for the paupers in mind. It is a sort of copy-book for grown-up masters and misses to write sentences in."

"Nonsense," said I—"you are satirical. I praise 'The Keepsake' in sober earnest. It has, in the first place, a Tacitus in Lord Dover. The Tacitus of 'The Keepsake'!—a pretty phrase, is it not? Its leading article, unlike the trashy tales of other annuals, is an historical sketch. How profound! The pretty dears like to be instructed as well as amused. The grown-up children are as good and as precise, you see, as Miss Edgeworth's real ones, who always seemed to me to be made of wood. I fancy them sitting down after breakfast, with their chins on their hands, and commencing the leading article—'Vicissitudes in the life of a Princess of the House of Brunswick, by Lord Dover.'"

M——. "The style of that article?"——

A——. "Is incomparable—I allow it. Such an aristocratic ease—so utterly unlike the English which people take pains with. Observe, for instance:—'It was to her (*the Countess Koningsmark's*) assistance that the Princess principally owed her escape. *She* collected for *her* whatever of money and of jewels could be found in the palace; *GAVE* *her* an old and trust-worthy man-servant of *her* *own*, who spoke French and German, to accompany *her*, and one of *her* own *femmes de chambre*.' Now, pray, observe the agreeable confusion of those *hers*—evidently meant on purpose to exer-

cise the attention of the reader—a sort of intellectual puzzle for the drawing-room—a kind of emulative rival to—

‘If Tom’s father is John’s son,
What relation is Tom to John?’

“Then, too, mark the noble indifference to common people with which the historian announces that the Countess *gave* the Princess her servant—an absolute present—like a horse or a *calèche*. *GAVE!*—Oh! the happy expression! But what did she give?—there’s the master-stroke. A servant?—Yes! you or I would have said a servant—Lord Dover says emphatically, a *man-servant*. This is worthy the phraseology of Mr. Lister. I should think the author of ‘Arlington’ said *man-servant*. Oh, what a butler is here undone by being a Lord and an historian!”

M——. Turning over another page. “But lo! an instance of brevity in the Tacitus of ‘The Keepsake’ surpassing that of Tacitus of the annals. ‘He proposed, at the same time, to the Chevalier, to unite his fortune with theirs in the undertaking. D’Aubant *accepted* (?) with readiness, joined his funds, &c.’ Accepted?—accepted what? There is something delicious in this supercilious omission of the substantive—in this haughty disregard for the King’s English and the subject’s comprehension. None of your Gibbonian superfluity of words with Lord Dover! ‘He *accepts* with readiness,’ and leaves you to determine whether it is an invitation to dinner, or a proposition for destroying puppy dogs.”

A——. “The Tacitus of ‘The Keepsake’ is immediately succeeded by its Pindar—the Honourable Henry Liddell—a gentleman who, inspired by the Olympic *Game*—Anglicè grouse—bursts forth into a dithyrambic upon the moors:—

‘The moors—the moors—the bonny brown moors.’

This inspired poet—the Bard of the Double-Barrel—is, like his immortal model, very much given to that boldness of phrase which usually contradicts in the end of the verse the assertion of the beginning. For instance, he inquires with a striking enthusiasm,—

‘Oh, know ye the region in spring more fair,
Than the *banks* and the *glens* of the moorland *bare*?’

Now, if it have banks and glens, how comes it bare? How?—why, because the last word in the verse before it was ‘fair!’ The Honourable Henry Liddell is a very joyous poet—cheerful as Homer—but as he proceeds he grows mighty pathetic. The Duke of Athol, with whom he used to dine, is dead:—

‘And the coronach rings on the mountains of Blair,
For the lord of the woods and the moorlands bare.’

Just observe how thoroughly in keeping with the sporting genius of the Honourable Henry Liddell is the cause of his sorrow. It is so like a younger brother to mourn for the loss of the nobleman who cooked his grouse for him. Such are the grand emotions which agitate the soul of the Pindar of ‘The Keepsake.’ But the Pindar of ‘The Keepsake’ has a rival in the Honourable John Hobart

Craddock, who lately, to the astonishment of the world, elongated that melodious name into Caradoc. A minstrel in 'The Court Journal' informs us that the said Honourable John is—

'Apollo's son in form and lute.'

Apollo's son thus emulates his sire:—

'Then, rouse, ye youths! 'tis joy, *not labour*,
To hurl a lance and wield a *sabre*.'

Apollo must be proud of such an heir to his lyre!"

M——. "But not contented with the laity of genius, the presiding spirit of the Work has invoked also the muse of the hierarchy, and rejoiceth mightily in the minstrelsy of Archdeacon Spencer. The Tacitus, the Pindar, 'the Apollo's son in form and lute,'—all shrink before this Reverend Rosa Matilda of 'The Keepsake.' Hark! *

"Where the consecrated willow
Graceful shades the flowery shore,
And the sound of distant billow
Gently steals from Ocean's roar."

There (viz.; in the Archdeacon's 'heart of hearts,')

"There the eye whose partial blindness
Could no wayward faults perceive;
There the voice of answering kindness
Still in *fadeless image*, live."

The fadeless image of a voice! Well done, Archdeacon. But enough—

"On the Rose's flushing bosom
Warm the setting sun-beams play;
On the violet's *kindred* blossom
Fonder still the lights delay."

“Who shall laugh at the Church now? Who shall say its Archdeacons are not men of solid intellect and sound doctrine? Every line of the Archdeacon Spencer is a rap on the knuckles of the Radicals. The Honourable Grantley Berkely is not less diverting than his fellow-labourers. He favours us with a moral tale of seduction—it really is quite delightful to see the Aristocracy, poor creatures,—so good, and so. industrious. He informs us of a woodcutting poacher, whom “a wholesome punishment given in strict justice, not only reformed in his manner of life, but caused in him such a distaste to the company of the miserable and disgusting objects with whom it was his lot to be confined,” &c. This is a prodigiously fine remark—quite original—and proves the propriety of shutting up young offenders with miserable and disgusting objects. Why does not the Hon. Grantley Berkely favour us with hints upon prison discipline, and the tendency of corrupt company to reform young woodcutters. It would be novel at least. But perhaps the Honourable Grantley Berkely is only profound by fits—poetry is evidently his forte—witness—“The *less* birds had long ceased their summer song, and were seen flocking together in search of the ripening berry that peeped in tempting luxury between the varying and many coloured leaves, *which like the vest on the bosom of beauty, were about to be withdrawn on the gentle sigh of the waving wind approaching like a welcome lover!*” All this is undeniably fine! there is a simple grandeur—a—a *je ne sçai quoi* about it, that convinces one that

the Honourable Grantley Berkely is the Plato of 'The Keepsake.'"

M——. "Seriously—it is worth some critic's while to single out this Annual from its fellow, because it is one with a peculiar ambition—the ambition of having lord and lady contributors: it insults the Public by supposing they value trash by Honourable Henries; it sprouts forth into yearly ineptitude, and attempts to bring silliness into a solar system. So much for the '*Icon Lordfannieke*!'"

A——. "What think you of the design of perpetuating Abbotsford to Sir Walter's family, as being the best monument to himself?"

M——. "Why, it smells of the Aristocracy who managed the Committee, and are always for 'entails.' It is a plan open to objections. In the first place, the hereditary transmission of the house is no monument at all to Scott: pilgrims would resort to Abbotsford equally whether in the possession of his children or that of strangers. In the second place, if, by a special act of the Legislature, the house is always to go to the heir-male with only its inadequate estate, it is likely, some years hence, to be an incumbrance rather than a blessing. Thirdly,—There is something offensive in the principle of sanctifying the worst of all laws—that of rigid entail—by one popular instance. Rewards to public men should not partake of the nature of family benefits, especially where the son, who receives the honour, is not publicly distinguished by a single one of the qualities of the father, for whose virtues or talents—not for whose name—they ought to be de-

signed. These reasons make me waver as to the merits of the plan, (although, by the way, my name is included in the list of the committee;) and the only reflection that combats them is the feeling that poor Scott himself would have felt the project as the most acceptable homage to his genius.—But *à propos* of the monument. How good in the Duke of Buccleugh to excuse the amount of his donation by saying, it is exactly because he is rich that it would be bad taste in him to be liberal! ‘Only think,’ he says, ‘if I were to outdo the rest of the Peers, would not that be monstrous improper?’ So that his Grace is a niggard merely out of motives of delicacy!”

A——. “What a beautiful edition of Byron this is of Murray’s! It has only one fault—it contains too much. The beauty of the small poems, which used to be so conspicuous in the old editions, is quite drowned in the little rivulets of trash which have been poured into the present. Every thing that Byron would most cautiously have banished has been most carefully inserted; and the best joke in the world is, that Mr. Lockhart—(at least I suppose it is that gentleman,—his pardon if I wrong him)—says, with a sanctimonious air,—(on inserting those beautiful and most characteristic lines by Lord Byron, ‘On hearing that his wife was ill,’ which are given in Lady Blessington’s ‘Conversations,’)—that, forsooth, ‘having recently found their way into circulation, he (we) must include them, though *with reluctance*, in this collection.’ Why, what a puling piece of nonsense is this! ‘Reluctance!’—when the man’s running

into every hole and corner to pick up every dirty, thrown-away scrap of Byron's writing, whether intended for publication or not,—whether worthy of publication or not, not a line of the most despicable doggerel has escaped him. And he prates of 'reluctance' about one, not only of the best of Byron's minor poems, but one which, affecting, as the editor of this edition ostentatiously does, to illustrate Byron's disposition and feelings, it would have been a most unpardonable omission *not* to have inserted: but the fact is, that Murray and his *clique* consider poor Byron their own property; and if any one else touches him, they start up, and cry 'sacrilege!' Thus do ordinary men trade upon great ones."

M—. "I see on your table two Supplements which 'The Spectator' has published, one on 'the Working of the House of Commons,'* the other on 'Public Expenditure.'† What admirable documents they are! The first gives a most luminous survey of the internal working of the representative assembly—of its functions, and machinery—of its committees, forms, hours of sitting, &c. It contains a table showing the entire transactions of the last Session; it displays in the closest and most masterly manner, the obstructions and delays of the present system, and suggests remedies well worthy of attention, and containing at least the principle and germ of a sound reform. The mass of information, the industry, the intelligence, the

* For the week ending September 29th.

† For the week ending November 3d.

general fairness of this document, are beyond all praise.* A more valuable appendix to the Bill of Reform has not been published. The Supplement on Public Expenditure is not a less extraordinary effort of spirit and ability. It gives a general account of the Expenditure of 1831-2—shows what may be reduced—what not. The Civil List, Pensions, &c.—all are considered. In fact, it displays a research, a lucid order of arrangement, one tithe of which, if displayed by a Member in an opening speech, would have gained him a permanent reputation. It is by efforts like these, made at great risk—at enormous expense—with a noble direction of judgment that consults what may instruct the people, and disdains to pander for lucre to their prejudices and their passions—it is also by philosophical and practical principles, applied to the matter of such facts, and calling the chaos into harmony, that we are made deservedly proud of the better portion of the English Press. And 'The Examiner' and 'The Spectator' have really done what the periodicals in Anne's time vainly boasted, called Wisdom to the breakfast-table, and brought home the best part of ethics (political knowledge) from the closet to men's daily understanding and ordinary business. These, not palaces and columns, are the public works which a people should covet, and of which legislators should be vain.'

2——. "Apropos of Parliament and Commit-

* Only in the lists of Divisions do we note some inaccuracies: we speak here from personal experience.

tees, how good 'Blackwood' was, in the 'Noctes' of last month touching the Dramatic Committee!"

M——. "Ay, what a poor figure the players make off the stage—their logic is preposterous. But the hardest thing of all is in the strictures of the 'Athenæum,' which visit the follies of the witnesses on the questions of the Committee, and think the Committee unwise because the actors were ninnies. On the contrary, there never, perhaps, was a Parliamentary Committee which, in so unprecedentedly short a time, examined so many witnesses, extracted so much information, or from the contradictory elements of contending interests, wrought out a result so generally satisfactory to the public."

A——. "I suppose we shall have a Bill on the Report next session, but I wish to Heaven we could get rid of the vexatious superfluity of the 'Censor!'"

M——. "That, I fear, would be impossible at present, because the Legislature are not prepared to admit the political allusions that would instantly follow an unshackled drama; and yet the effect of political allusions would be new life to the stage—it would keep up that connexion between the Actual and the Romantic which is necessary to sustain the general interest in mimic representations. Every one may perceive how eager the public are to extract from plays the most far-fetched allusions to the present time. If this were made a part of the legitimate province of the author, the theatres would overflow. In the early days of the drama, political allusions were common—they abound in

our great dramatists—they are redundant even in the dramas of the tyrannical age of Charles II. In Anne's time the cold and heavy tragedy of Cato would never have been popular, but for the political deductions drawn from it by both parties. The English, more than any people in the world, require the strong seasoning of politics to attract them to the stage, because they run more after daily politics than any of their neighbours, and have less sympathy with the abstract and ideal. If there were no censor, political allusions would abound in all new works, and thus the stage would become popular. Of course this would produce evil as well as good. But the good would preponderate in the long run. The monopolists themselves allow, that, as regards *morality*, the Public are more vigilant than the Censor himself—that what escapes the last has been hissed by the first. They make the office solely one of *political* expediency—but the question ought to be fairly faced—why should politics be banished from the stage of a free people? The same good taste that banishes indecencies would also banish any thing that passed the proper bounds of decorum in politics; for politics are morals, and like morals have their *To Prepon*. In fact, so far from inflaming the popular passion for politics, the stage would become an outlet for their expression; and many who now go to Political Unions, would, were politics *acted* on the stage, resort to the theatres."

M——. "The principle of classifying the play-houses, allowing one to act tragedy, another vaudeville."

deville, &c., is warmly embraced by certain parties; the 'Athenæum' advocates that system."

A——. "But who will bell the cat? Where are the legal terms by which you can define and classify plays? Who now can define the legitimate drama so strictly but what the definition may be always evaded. Classification is, in fact, impossible, unless the theatres are brought entirely under arbitrary control. In France, the government classifies theatres, because it pays for the support of theatres; but any theatre there could, if it please, evade the classification. It does not—why? because it is not its interest to do so. Leave the same grand principle to act upon the English managers. The small theatres will act whatever they can act best, because it will be their interest to do so; and plays will thus fall into their natural classification, according to the size, actors and capacities of a theatre. The interference of legislators cannot do better than common sense, and it may do much worse;—besides, they have no business to control private speculations unless they first turn them, as in France, into public institutions, and pay, as in that country, 80,000*l.* per annum for their support. It is the height of absurdity and unfairness in the Législation to interfere only for the purpose of forbidding the direction of other people's capital, except in one channel, and then, if they are ruined, to leave its victims to suffer for the vexatious injustice of the intermeddler."

M——. (taking up a new Novel)—"And what is this?"

A——. "Mrs. Hall's Buccaneer—an admirable

historical romance—full of interest—and with many new views of character. It is an Historical Romance, and yet unborrowed from Scott—it has not his mannerism—it is *sui generis*, which is saying a great deal. The author has introduced Cromwell in the foreground as the principal character, and done justice to the genius of the man; but he appears too often, and interferes too much in the love-story of the book. It is not that such an introduction does not belong to the *vrai*—it sins against the *vraisemblable*—it requires great judgment, and also great luck, to make us feel that a hero is never taken liberties with. I think, therefore, that Cromwell would have been more effective if he had appeared more rarely, and if he had been wholly withdrawn from the love-scenes; but then the story might have been less interesting to the general reader; and perhaps the dignity of Cromwell is designedly sacrificed to the stimulus of the tale. The plot, otherwise, is extremely well conceived—very artful and progressing—the story never flags—and you open at once upon the main interest. The two best characters are a serving-girl (whose simplicity,—kindliness, and beauty of heart are delineated with all the delicacy of womanhood and the felicity of genius) and a deformed youth, her lover, who, with the good qualities of a fine nature, unites the ire, the peevishness, the suspicion, that the sense of his personal inferiority produces. It is in charming unison with the character of Barbara (the damsel I have described) to make her love this ill-favoured youth, and to be attracted by the strength of his intellect;

you feel that she is just the person to have disregarded beauty in a suitor, and to have been proud of the homage of a superior intellect. The innocent weakness of her nature is such as only a woman could have wrought out—if a man had attempted that character the girl would have been a fool. She is just preserved from silliness by a hand that stays the character at the verge of simplicity—one step more—one step less, and Barbara would have been no creation; as it is, she is at once original and perfect. There is a villain, of course, in the book, but he is too cowardly. Women rarely paint villains well; they don't, like Shakspeare or Massinger, intoxicate themselves with a sense of the great power that accompanies great crimes—they make despicable villains instead of magnificent ones—which last alone belong to tragedy and grave fiction. The Stukelys and Mawworms ought to appertain to comedy. But to give you an idea of the nerve and vigour of the style, just read this passage, in which the villain meets his fate, beginning with "Roupall and the youth crept stealthily down the cliff by a secret path, &c."

M——. "Ah this is very fine. Mrs. Hall has a considerable mastery of style. Her Irish sketches possess great beauty of composition, and there is a little tale of hers in 'The Amulet' this year, which is written and conceived with extraordinary skill—the idea is even grand. A woman—simple—kind, but of a high and religious mind, is devotedly attached to a reprobate and ruffian husband; she endures his slights—his alienation—his brutality,

with untiring meekness, and unconquered love; but at last when her young family are growing up, the husband begins to initiate her son in his own career of crime. She remonstrates—implores in vain—she cautions her son against his father. The ruffian discovers it, and threatens her thus—

‘As sure as you are a living woman,’ he continued, with that concentrated rage which is a thousand times more dangerous than impetuous fury, ‘as sure as you are a living woman, you shall repent of this. I see the way to punish your wilfulness; if you oppose me in the management of my children, one by one they shall be taken from you to serve my purposes! You may look for them in vain, until (he added with a fiendish smile) you read their names in the columns of the Newgate Calendar.’

The deep and stern heart of the mother is now aroused. The husband fulfils his threat—he commits a robbery, in which he endeavours to entangle his son. A great and solemn determination nerves the mother, and she informs against her guilty husband, as the only means to save the bodies and souls of her guiltless children. Mind, this determination is accomplished with such tenderness, that the awe of it does not revolt. I esteem the conception of this story to be one of the most dread and tragic in modern composition—the struggles of the wife’s heart with the mother’s would have been especially striking on the stage, and I only regret that the development of such a plot should not have been either reserved for tragedy, or elaborated into a prolonged and regular work of fiction. Mrs. Hall evinces in this, as in ‘The Buccaneer,’ very marked talents for the stage, and if she would devote her time and skill

to a village tragedy, that should contain the simplicity and power of Grace Huntly, I feel confident that it would have a startling success. Very few writers of the day—male or female—equal this accomplished woman, in the power of touching the heart by pathetic, or exalting it by generous, emotions.—But to turn to politics. What do you think of the Westminster business? Awkward enough. Who is to blame?"

A—. "Nay, let me have your opinion. I am too recently returned—from—e-hem—I mean—to London, to be *au fait* at these political matters."

M—. "Why, then, the affair seems to me to stand thus:—I cannot admit, with some of the papers, that electors owe no gratitude to a faithful representative: that if he, on the one hand, has acted with honesty and talent in Parliament, they, on the other hand, bestowed on him the opportunity so to act. I hold such a doctrine to be base and fallacious. The obligations which a wise and good legislator confers on the world—the abuses he rectifies—the reforms he supports—the sacrifice of youth—of health—of pleasure—of time to the service of mankind, are not repaid—no, not in a thousandth part—by the mere honour of a seat in Parliament, however large the constituency and important the trust. It is exactly as unjust and as mean in electors to think there can be no gratitude due to the man they elect, because they have elected him, as it would be in a master to deem that he owes nothing to the steward who has protected his property against robbers, economized

his income, or established order in his house. What should we think of the master who said, 'I owe this man nothing, or he could never have thus served me if I had not made him my servant?' What logic and what gratitude! Precisely of the same nature are the logic and the gratitude of those who, admitting that Hobhouse has served his constituents as electors and citizens, yet contend that they owe him nothing for the service. You see that, taking this view of one part of the question, I am not likely to be biassed against Hobhouse's claims; but, supposing the electors come to Sir John and say, such and such opinions you advocated out of office, will you originate or support them now you are in?' And supposing Sir John declares he will not answer that question—that the content of his constituents is to him a matter of perfect indifference—and dismisses the deputation with a *brusque* resentment at their merely asking him if his opinions are unchanged, and he will some time or other put those opinions into action, and supposing, too, that while *now* declaring against pledges, he is known formerly to have advocated—nay—to have insisted upon pledges in these memorable words: 'To any definite questions, I shall think myself *bound* to give a sincere answer; for it appears to my judgment that the clamour raised against what is called demanding a pledge, has no foundation in theory or practice,—*then* who can doubt that Hobhouse is in the wrong, and the electors in the right. In vain then would the sophists of the Treasury, on the one hand, or of the Peel bench on the other, assert that he is to be

turned out because he is in office. He is not to be turned out because he has come into power, but because he has gone out of his opinions. In vain is it to say that he is turned out for not giving pledges—he is turned out because one year he calls himself bound to give pledges, another year bound not even to answer questions. In vain, also, is it to say a Ministry cannot get on, if a Minister is not to sacrifice his individual opinions to the concord of the whole. A Minister of Sir John Hobhouse's rank, talents, eloquence, and character, (placed, as he is, much too low for his claims, he ought at least to have been in the Cabinet,) should only have accepted office on the understanding that he was to be allowed to be consistent—that he was to carry into effect the measures he had declared necessary to the welfare of the country: If he did not do this, the electors of Westminster were right to be discontented: if he did, he ought to have been glad to seize the opportunity to declare the new facilities for good of which he had so nobly possessed himself. And here I cannot sufficiently blame that part of Colonel Evans' letter which makes office itself a fault in a Member for Westminster. Are the representatives of the smallest constituencies alone to be in power? or is a man less useful, because he is in a position to put his opinions into effect? This doctrine is not worthy so enlightened a man as Colonel Evans.

“I have a very warm admiration of Hobhouse in many respects, but I think he has evidently committed a mistake at the least. He committed

a mistake either in taking office with his hands tied, or in refusing to avow that he retained in office his former opinions—an avowal due to his character.* Upon the whole, there is something salutary in the business, however it turn out. It is salutary that a constituency should be doubly jealous of representatives in office—that it should tie them to their old politics. This, if generally acted upon, would, in the first place, make men more moderate in their alleged opinions, and more cautious how they attack a Government for offences they themselves may commit. In the second place, it would make the remedy of abuses more expeditious—those who come into office would be no longer divided about this measure or that. Able men could only join a Government on the understanding that able measures are to be adopted; and talent will thus be measured by its utilities. As regards Colonel Evans, no one, on

* But considering Sir John Hobhouse's great talents and long services—we think every possible facility ought to be given him for explanation. We wish we could say that we are satisfied with his speech of last Monday, but we are not—it is as vague as it is eloquent! We ourselves are among the constituency of Westminster—we have a sincere personal regard for Colonel Evans—and scarce any acquaintance with Sir John Hobhouse—but we should think ourselves bound to give Hobhouse our vote in preference to any other candidate, if he would but say publicly that he not only retains the opinions he once professed, but will labour with equal zeal to bring them into effect. If he will not say this, he *leaves the Electors of Westminster no option*. The liberalism which is the ladder to self-interests is the most dangerous of all hypocrisies. Sir John Hobhouse says he relies on the plain-dealing of the Electors,—we give him our vote according as he shows us plain-dealing himself.

reflection, can fairly consider *him* to blame. He had not even the ties of party with Sir John Hobhouse or with the Ministry; he has never associated himself with the Whigs; he has been done scant justice to by the Government. One of the best officers in Europe, he has not had promotion because he has not been a Lord's son. He is perfectly free from all obligations to all parties; and stands alone, with his gallant reputation—his manly character—his enterprising disposition—and his sturdy understanding, for his sole friends. The cry that a Reformer should not oppose a Reformer will come with an ill grace from Ministers, when Colonel Maberly, an official, is opposed to Mr. Perry, a young and able Reformer, highly distinguished by his efforts against the taxes on Knowledge, and when the Premier's own son, Colonel Grey, was sent down last session to Wycombe to oppose Mr. D'Israeli, already in the field; and who, by his printed addresses, pledged himself to triennial parliaments, vote by ballot, and the abolition of taxes on Knowledge. The friends of Colonel Grey (he himself, of course, could not have sanctioned the hypocrisy) endeavoured to excuse themselves by calling Mr. D'Israeli, in the face of all his printed and pledged annunciations, a Tory, solely because his father was one, and because his father's friends supported him upon private or local grounds, (Mr. D'Israeli living in the county.*)

* But some old opinions (now publicly renounced) in works written by Mr. D'Israeli, when a mere boy, may be another cause of accusation? Hardly so, we imagine, with Lord Palmerston on the same bench as the accuser.

Nothing could be more unhandsome than this charge; and the brilliant author of 'Contarini Fleming' aptly avenged himself on some placard styling him a Tory in disguise, by asserting 'that the only Tory in disguise was a Whig in office!' The Ministry thought themselves entitled to be angry with public men, (equally accredited with themselves for unflinching liberality of opinion,) for giving, previously to Colonel Grey's declaring himself, recommendatory letters to this able and plain-speaking candidate. Certainly such a recommendation would not have been given against the son of Lord Grey—a man to whom the country is so largely indebted—had Colonel Grey *then* been in the field; but to inculcate the doctrine that no Reformer is to oppose a Reformer, and then to oppose and to calumniate a very distinguished and avowed Reformer, solely because he is not one of the Aristocratic Whig *clique*, is a little too bad! With this example, of Reformer opposing Reformer, the Ministers must beware how they throw stones."

A——. "Very true—and now let us take a ride."

CHAPTER IX.

The non-necessity of a Termination to these Papers—The Expediency of writing one's own Life—A Dinner at a Wit's—The Character of a Man à-la-mode—The Nine-pin Parliament—Gully and Cobbett—Electioneering Anecdotes—Don Telesforo de Trueba's new Comedy—Incivility progresses with Civilization—Monck Mason—Plutarch's Musical Instruments—Story of the Three Bailiffs—Walk through London at Night—An Adventure—Love and its Disadvantages—Passion, its History and its Termination.

SHALL I ever finish these papers? I intended to conclude them with the new year; but wherefore? they suit one month as well as another—their subjects always vary—nothing can be more dissimilar than two several numbers of the series, touching on all subjects, exhausting none. These papers fulfil for the "New Monthly" the same object as the "Noctes" fulfil for "Blackwood's;" and, like the "Noctes," therefore, may be continued while the world continues to furnish matter for criticism and comment.

How many adventures are yet left for me! Thank heaven, I am always getting into some scrape or another; and even when I do seize an interval of leisure, and become orderly, I am only engaged in writing a history of the pranks I have played. Recent biographies have taught me the necessity of one thing—I shall write my own biography myself! I do not intend to be made into four volumes,

price 2l. 2s., with, "about this time we may suppose," and "at this event let us pause to imagine his emotions." No! I shall tell my own plain story in my own best plain way. And never, I will venture to say, has any literary man had a more strange and various life than I have! Happily, too, it is not over yet: the best part is, I hope, to come. Patience, and shuffle the cards.

A dinner at Greville's! that is really a treat. There I shall learn all the gossip of the day. Asmodeus"——

"At your service."

"Ah, my dear Devil! it is an age since I saw you! What have you been about?"

"Playing the devil at elections."

"Excellent! Have you been standing yourself, or merely exerting your vocation as an agent?"

"Why, as I like making mischief, I went down to a large town in my proper character."

"What! as a devil?"

"No! as a Conservative. It is to the interest of the Infernals to keep things in this world exactly as they are. We could not be better off. Accordingly, they have made a subscription to get as many of us in as possible; and I received three thousand pounds from our Committee in Charles Street, in order to contest the borough of ——"

"Well, and"——

"No sooner did I appear at the balcony, than they began to stone me. I leave that fate for your martyrs, (stones don't agree with us,) and I retired into the dining-room to harangue my committee. Meanwhile the riot thickened—windows crashed—

bones smashed—beer flowed, and I sent out half-a-dozen agents to bribe the waverers. In a word, I kept the town for three days in a most diabolical state, and retired handsomely on the day of nomination, with some dozen or two of drunken souls booked for out voters in the general election below. I served myself better than I did my employers of Charles Street. But where are you going? I see you are dressed—for conquest?”

“Oh, I am going to dine with Greville, a man whom, in all probability, you will know better one of these days. Suppose you accompany me incog.? his parties are agreeable enough.”

The Devil consented, and I drove him to Greville's in my cabriolet. He made himself invisible during dinner, and he performed the same charm with a couple of bottles of champagne—the imp loves his glass.

Greville is one of those men who make it *a point* to live in May Fair. He is so very much the *ton*, that he is a little *mauvais ton*. His horses are *too* handsome—his liveries *too* plain—and his cook *too* good. His imagination is above the level of that mediocre faculty—*Taste*; and he always wishes to play the *ideal* of the fine gentleman, rather than the reality. He is witty, learned, versatile, and luxurious. He was made for a Frenchman, and has lived half his life in Paris: his age is thirty-five; his eyes dark; his voice soft; and his linen and teeth the whitest things in the world.

We sat down to dinner to the number of four; all, except myself, fresh from electioneering; all once more M. P'd. into the prospective dignity of franking,

1st Diner out. Famous Parliament!—the last blow to the Tories, and the first to the Destructives!—all Whigs.”

2d Diner out. Yes, the Nine-pin Parliament—an immense *juste milieu*, and two little extremes.

Greville. My friend Gully returned! L—— says, with a mock gravity, that he will be a very dangerous reasoner—for his arguments will be so-fist-ical!

Myself, alias A——. To such an extreme, I fear, as to be given absolutely to fibbing.

2d Diner out. I hear he is quite a Utilitarian, and much addicted to *Mill*.

A——. Then he must have rattled; for in his earlier life, he was famous for his propensity to *Peel*!

2d Diner out. There is Cobbett, too, training himself

“To tread with sturdy steps the *mountain’s* brow.”

How the deuce—(*Greville*, some wine; *Chablis*, if you please)—how the deuce is he to bear our hours? The old fellow swears, in his Register, that he goes to bed at eight, and that is the reason he’s so hearty; faith, we shall kill him by the end of the first week—the *stroke* of twelve will be his death-blow.

Greville. His maiden motion is to be, “That Burdet’s property be confiscated to the payment of the National Debt.”

1st Diner out. He will be insatiably long—he thinks nothing of three hours—and he is especially anxious to eclipse Brougham’s celebrated prolixity on Law Reforms.

Greville. Jealousy and vanity are his two great characteristics; he will wish to outshine O'Connell, and he will die with rage at his failure.

1st Diner out. But the best of all is my friend ——. I met him on the road to his borough, with a travelling equipage of two bull-dogs, two boxers, a military friend, and a brace of pistols. "I like to be prepared," said —, twirling *his mustachios*, '*in case people behave unhandsomely!*'"

All. Ha, ha—so like" —

A——. What sort of a thing is Trueba's comedy?"

Greville. Very good, on the whole; sharp—smart Spanish,—with a true enough perception of the comic, and a dash of philosophy about it. He's a clever fellow that Trueba, if he would not write so much.

A——. His fecundity reminds me of what Hazlitt says of Lope de Vega. "What impertinence, to boast of writing a comedy *before* breakfast—he had plenty of time to do it *after!*"

1st Diner out. Very good. Who said that? Haz—Haz—"

A——. Hazlitt.

1st Diner out. Who? Hazlitt. I never heard of him! Is he in society?

A——. Not in your set, I fancy.

2d Diner out. Oh, one of your authors—eh!

1st Diner out. Authors! nay; I know all the best of them—by title at least.

A——Do you? let's hear them. Count away.

1st Diner out, (on his fingers.) Byron, Scott, Southey, Moore; and—and—ay, Campbell; that's all.

Greville, (humming a tune.)

"Who is wise—is wise—is wise,
Studies books in reading men."

Take some hock, *A*——, and don't puzzle my friend here, who, I can assure you, is so fond of the belles lettres, that when we were at Eton together, he inscribed his gun with the old motto—

—————"Delightful task,
To teach the young idea how to shoot!"

A——. Yes; and he wrote "*Styx*" on his sword-cane; meaning to express, in one word, that it was letiferous.

1st Diner out, (evidently pleased.) Psha! Let me recommend this *Matelotte*. How is William Brougham?"

Greville. Recovering fast, to the despair of six unsuccessful candidates, who, at the report of his death, all started for London, in the hope of Southwark. I am heartily glad of it; for he's a capital fellow—very amiable and very clever.

A——. You recollect *K*——? Well, he sent a courier on to the borough of ———, saying, he understood there were two gentlemen standing for it unwilling to pledge themselves. He begged to announce that a gentleman was coming in his carriage and four, willing to pledge himself to any thing.

Greville. Ha! ha! That's excellent. Apropos of pledges. Young—— calls them *infernal* things.

1st Diner out. Why, I thought he was a desperate Radical.

Greville. Yes; but he says that even the staunch-

est Radical———*must* think pledges———*damn a Tory!*

1st Diner out. So Lord Abercorn has taken Chesterfield House. What a succession of pretty faces! Lady Abercorn after Lady Chesterfield. How the great Lord, (Philip Dormer,) would bow and smile, if he were alive!

Greville. What's the reason, A——, since you're a philosopher, that the more civilized we grow, the more uncivil we become? Witness France and England: in both, the "Old School" signifies every thing polished, and the "New School" every thing rude.

A——. I suppose because Courts form manners; and, as we grow wiser, Courts grow out of fashion. Thus, by degrees, Kings themselves unconsciously follow, instead of setting, the popular mode; and Louis Philippe and William the Fourth value themselves on their bourgeoisie simplicity, because bourgeoisie simplicity is a means to be popular. So much for Reason; now for Song. Who's to have the opera this year? Now Monck Mason is gone, I intend to afford myself a box.

Greville. Ah, the poor Monck! He is now going to make a monastery of the Pantheon. Certainly, Monck was a good type of a musical instrument; devilish hollow, and formed to make a noise.

A——. Like all musicians in that respect, who are usually the most inane of creatures! Our friend there, who knows all the authors by heart, will tell you that Plutarch said the best instruments in his time were made out of the jaw-bones of asses.

Greville. Ha! ha! Not bad, that!

A——. Plutarch is obliged to you.

1st Diner out. So G—— has gone on the Continent. He says there are no waters like those of Aix-la-Chapelle, to rid him of his hereditary complaint.

Greville. What's that?

1st Diner out. Duns!

A——. Ha! ha! Yes, it is very true; it is hereditary: his father was more afflicted than himself. Apwopos of that: did you ever hear how old G—— served the three bailiffs?"

Greville. No; let's have it.

A——. Well; G—— had retired to a quiet watering-place, after innumerable and most narrow escapes, where he proposed to enjoy himself under a feigned name, and a red wig. Unhappily, however, he was tracked, trapped, and arrested by three sturdy fellows in his own house. The fertile genius of G—— was not dismayed. With his habitual politeness, he begged the bailiffs to be seated, placed a large round of beef and two or three bottles of wine before them, and entreated permission to write to a friend a few miles off, and await the answer, previously to his departure for the 'Debtor's side.' The bailiffs, pleased with the beef and wine, consented. G—— wrote a note to a captain of a vessel, who only waited a favourable wind to set sail, and who had found much difficulty in pressing sufficient seamen. At that time, impressment was carried on with the most vigorous severity.

As soon as the Captain arrived, which he did with half a score of tall fellows at his heels, G——

pointing to the bailiffs, who were still making merry, exclaims, "Ah, my dear friend, these are the three persons I mentioned in my note; just the thing for your vessel. Observe how strong they are! Did you ever see men more stoutly built? Take them, my good friend; nay, no thanks: I make you a present of them." The Captain, *enchant de son cadeau*, ordered his escort instantly to seize the astonished bailiffs; and despite of their struggles and protestations, they were hurried away, and shipped off next day to the East Indies.

Greville. Ha! ha! ha!—A New Way, indeed, to pay Old Debts!

* * * * *

"Oh! Asmodeus," said I, as I walked forth from Greville's arm-and-arm with the Devil, "what a beautiful night! Who shall say that a great city hath not as much poetry as the solitudes of fields and streams? The silence of these mighty marts of industry and pleasure—the mystery that hangs over every house thus still and impenetrable—a record, and often a romance, in each—the muffled shapes stealing across from time to time; and if, wandering from these statelier quarters, you touch near upon the more squalid abodes of men—the stir, the hubbub, the wild mirth of desperate hearts—the dark and dread interest that belongs to crime. Then, anon, in some high chamber, you see a solitary light—waning not, nor blinking, through the gloom. How often have I paused to gaze on such a light, and busy myself with conjecture! Does it shine over the deep delight of study—the open volume and the worn brow—the young ambi-

tion of Knowledge—that false friend which nurseth in her bosom disease and early death? Does it wake beside the vigil of some woman heart, beating for the approach of a guilty leman, or waiting, in chillness and in dread, the slow and heavy step of one returning from the reeking haunts of the gamester, her wedded mate, perhaps her early love? Is there not more poetry in this than in wastes, pregnant only with the dull animal life? What have the woods and waters equal to the romance of the human heart? And here, too, Asmodeus, what scope for enterprise—that life of life! What variety! what incident! Verily, the knight-errant of old knew not half the adventures that may befall a man, young, bold, and gallant, in a great city. Is it not so, Asmodeus? You are the demon of intrigue—I appeal to you!”

“Why, I must own you speak truth. But if so fond of adventure, why not seek it? Do you observe that door ajar?—there, yonder, in that street opening to our right. And do you not note something of a white drapery, just visible at the aperture? There is an adventure for you!”

“Thanks. I obey the hint. Wait here my return.”

Warmed with wine, and my spirits heightened by the bracing air of the night, I was indeed ripe for any adventure: so, gliding rapidly into the street which Asmodeus indicated, I arrived at the half open door. It was one of those moderately sized houses which characterize the smaller streets of Mayfair. The lamp burnt opposite, bright and steady: the apparition of the white drapery was

gone. Trusting to my lucky stars, I stole lightly up the steps, and entered the passage. All was gloom and shadow.

"Is that you," murmured a voice in the dark.

"It is myself, and no other," said I, in a breathless whisper.

"Follow me, then," answered the voice; and the door was softly shut.

"I am in for it," thought I: "so much the better." My hand was gently seized by fingers so soft and delicate, that I felt a very strange sensation tingling up to my shoulder bone—perhaps it did not stop there. I followed my conductor, who glided on with a light step, and we soon began to ascend the stairs. We passed the first landing-place. "I hope," thought I, "the lady is not a housemaid. I have a horror of the servile. But her hand—no! this hand is not made for mops!" We halted at the second floor. My conductress opened a door, and, and—shall I break off here?—I have a great mind—no! I'll go on. Well, then, reader, I found myself in a room—not alone—ah! not alone with my guide, but with three other damsels, all sitting round a table, and all under twenty. A pair of wax candles illumed the apartment, which was a well-furnished, but not gaudy, dressing-room. I looked round, and bowed with a most courtly gravity. The ladies uttered a little scream.

"Anne! Anne! who have you brought here?"

Anne stood thunderstruck, gazing at me as if I had been the red man in "Der Freischütz." I, in my turn, gazed at her. She was, apparently, about five and twenty; plainly, but well dressed; of a

small and delicate shape, with a face slightly marked with the small-pox. But such a pair of black eyes! and those eyes very soon began to dart fire!

"Who are you, sir? How dare you"——

"Nay, nay; pray, no scolding. Is it my fault, fair Anne, that I am here? You see I can do you no mischief. There are four of you; and what is one odd fish among so many?"

"Sir!"

"Sir!"

"This is too bad!"

"I'll raise the house!"

"Get out!"

"Go along with you!"

"What do you take us for?"

"Pardon me, that is exactly the question I was going to ask you! What do you take *me* for?"

"Did Mr. Gabriel tell you——" began my guide, who, on looking at me twice, and seeing I was under thirty, and not dressed like a house-breaker (for it is only your swindlers who are great dandies, and go by the name of Ferdinand Augustus,) began a little to relent from her first rage;—

"Gabriel, Gabriel,—oh, my guardian angel!" thought I; for, as by intuition, I suddenly guessed at the origin of the whole proceeding. "Yes," said I, aloud, "Mr. Gabriel *did* tell me that you wished to have your fortunes told, and being engaged himself, he sent me as the ablest of his pupils to supply his place. Oh, Mr. Gabriel is a great man: ladies, pray be seated: a pen and ink, if you please. What hour were you born, ma'am? Allow me to take this chair."

Now, the reader probably knows that Gabriel is a celebrated fortune-teller, in great request at the west end of the town; he has been consulted at all times and by all persons. I myself have had my fortune told by him; and he gave me seven children, for which I thank him, as I ought! In fact, he is a friend of mine, and of yours, too, dear reader, if you pay him his fees.

Now, the damsels looked at each other, a smile broke over the face of Anne; it spread like contagion; nay, it broke out into a giggle; in a few minutes we became excellent friends. Luckily, I knew a little of the mysteries of soothsaying: chiromancy is one of my strong points, and, as to nativities, what did Gabriel promise me seven children for, if it were not to know something about casting a birth?

We became excellent friends: the girls were young, merry, innocent, and, there being four of them, fearless. I counted the lines in their hands, made all sorts of odd figures out of Euclid, and, by the help of the Asses' Bridge, I foretold Anne a lord's elder son. They produced a bottle of sherry and some cakes: oh, how happy we were! how talkative! how gay! I blessed my stars and Asmodeus, and stayed there till one o'clock. I found that three of the young ladies were the daughters of the Oikodespotes, the master of the house, and, after some sifting I learnt his name: I recognised it (for one can't live in London without knowing a little about everyone,) as that of a man of respectable parentage, who had married an actress early in life, and become involved in difficulties; he could

not work or beg, but he could live upon his wit; he gambled—won, entered, as a dormant partner, in a celebrated gaming-house, and made a decent competency without much public disgrace. His wife had been long dead. She had left him three daughters: I had often heard of their personal attractions, but he had kept them tolerably well insulated from temptation. I now saw them; yes, as I said before, they were gay, but as yet innocent: the imperfect education they had received, the want of all maternal care, and the example of no very decorous parentage, made them eager for amusement and adventure; just the persons to make an appointment with old Gabriel, and to forgive the error which introduced a young astrologer in his stead. But, the fourth maiden! now, now, I come to her. Fancy, then, a girl of about seventeen, with a face younger, a form maturer, than her years; her hair dark, soft, silky, and arranged like a Christian's, viz. not in those irredeemable ringlets which trail down like a banyan tree, but parted with two slight curls on either temple; her forehead white and transparent, straight eyebrows, long lashes, with eyes of a real blue; not that cold gray which passes off for blue with the undiscerning, but rich, radiant, deep as Raphael himself, in his purest dream of colour, would have made them: an indifferent nose, (I, for my own part, am contented with a secondary order of nose in a woman; the best are too severe;)—piquant, and well set: a mouth, so fresh and young, that you might fancy it like that of hers in the fairy tale, from which dropped flowers in their tenderest bloom: teeth

small, white, and slightly parted each from the other; a peculiarity not against my taste, though the physiognomists call it deceitful: beautiful hands; a satin skin; a dimple, and a laugh like silver. Such is the picture of Julia L., and I am over head and ears in love with her. She talked little, and when she did speak looked away shyly, and laughed prettily, colouring all the while. This was very intoxicating: I blessed the devil for the good thing he had put me up to, and when Anne conducted me down stairs, as the clock struck one, and they promised to admit me when I called the next day, I thought my first youth had returned to me, and I was once more eighteen. Ah! happy age! What hopes then were mine, and what a heart? Can I love another again? Certainly not. Very well. Then I can see Julia with perfect safety.

Asmodeus was with me at breakfast the next morning; I shook him cordially by the hand;—nay, I all but embraced him. He grinned his most withering grin at my transports.

“Moderate yourself, my dear friend,” said the Demon, “what are you about to do—are you going to plunge into this *amour* or not?”

“*Amour!*—plunge!—bah!—I am going to see Julia.”

“I wash my hand of the consequences,” said Asmodeus.

“Do you foresee them, then?”

“That is a question I may not answer;—but does not every creature, with a grain of common sense, see how such follies invariably end? Well, well, recollect the old fable of the pot of clay and

the pot of gold going down the stream—the pot of clay is so proud of its friend, and the first moment the tide brings them fairly together, it is broken to pieces!”

“What rhodomontade is this, Asmodeus? What have pots of clay and gold to do with me and Julia?”

“All women in love resemble the pots of clay—*voilà tout*.”

The warning tone of the Demon made some impression on me, but it soon wore off. I repaired to the house, was admitted, and saw Julia once more: she is even lovelier by day than at night, her complexion is so fresh and pure: youth clings round her like a garment of light, and its robe is yet all sparkling with the dews of childhood. I wish she would talk more; her silence oppresses me with the weight of my own emotions; yet her eyes are less prudent than her lips, and we converse very agreeably by their help. So, then, I am in love—fairly in love. I have long had a presentiment that that pleasant accident was about to happen; nay, I told the Devil so, and he would not believe me. I think, upon the whole, I bear the event with becoming fortitude; and, after all, it has its evils; all other enjoyments become trite beside it. Play ceases to intoxicate, wine hath lost its sparkle, companionship wearies, one grows very dull at one’s club. Love need well have its charms to recompense us for all the pleasures it spoils; and I have not yet got to the most delicious part of the history—correspondence! When one begins to receive letters, a new existence fills one; there is an

ether in one's veins. What sweet triumph to extort those expressions from the pen, which afterwards *must* be ratified with the lip, however bashful it be! With what new objects the day is filled! What a new excitement attaches itself to time!—"In two hours hence I shall hear from her!"—with what expectation—what hope—what fear—what palpitating nerves—one lives till then! But, alas! how do all these extasies end?—in wo, if the suit be not successful—in satiety if it is. No doubt this extreme love is a false calculation. I agree with Mr. Mill, "we ought to be brought up differently." But as, unhappily, I was educated in the old system, I fear I cannot mend myself, so I must be very careful with my children. They shall be trained up to a proper economy of the passions, and shall never get in love without knowing exactly what it will cost them! Meanwhile, I shall take these geraniums to Julia. Reader, farewell, and long for next month, that you may know more.

My adventures now become of a more grave and earnest character than they have been wont to be. The reader must be prepared to confine his interest solely to sublunary sources—the supernatural has vanished from my life—unless, indeed, as at times I believe, nothing is so marvellous or so alien to our earthly and common nature as the spirit that animates and transforms us when we love.

It was evening, clear and frosty—I stood in one of the small deserted streets that intersect Mayfair, waiting for Julia. Yes! our attachment has now progressed to that point; we met—alone and in se-

cret. From the hour Julia first consented to these interviews, Asmodeus left me; I have not seen him since.

"My gratitude stops here," said he. "It was my task to amuse, to interest you, but no more. I deal not with the passions—I can do nothing for you in this affair. You are in love, and in the hands of a stronger demon than myself. Adieu! when the spell is broken we may meet again." With these words he vanished, and has, I suspect, engaged his services for the present to the Marquis of Hartford.

I was waiting then, in this lonely street, for the coming of Julia; I heard the clock strike eight, the appointed hour, but I saw not her dark mantle and graceful form emerging from the cross street which led to our *rendezvous*. And who was Julia, and what? She was a relation of the gaming adventurer at whose house and with whose daughter I had first seen her—and she lived at somewhat a distant part of the town with a sister who was a widow and much older than herself. Occupied in the business of an extensive trade, and the cares of a growing family, this sister left Julia to the guidance of her own susceptible fancy and youthful inexperience—left her to reflect—to imagine—to act as she would, and the consequence was that she fell in love. She was thoroughly guileless, and almost thoroughly ignorant. She could read indeed, but only novels, and those not of the gravest; she could write—but in no fluent hand, and if her heart taught her the sentiment that supplies skill, her diffidence for-

bade her to express it. She was quiet, melancholy, yet quickly moved to mirth—sensitive, and yet pure. I afterwards discovered that pride was her prevailing characteristic, but at first it lay concealed. I already loved her even for her deficiencies, for they were not of Nature but of Education.

And who and what is her lover? Long as I have been relating these adventures, I have not yet communicated that secret. Writing about myself, I have not yet disclosed myself. I will now do so—I am, then, an idle, wandering, unmarried man—rich, well-born, still young—who have read much, written somewhat, and lived for pleasure, action, and the hour—keeping thought for study, but excluding it from enterprise, and ready to plunge into any plan or any pursuit, so that it promised the excitement of something new. Such a life engenders more of remembrance than of hope; it flings our dreams back upon the past, instead of urging them to the future—it gives us excitement in retrospection, but satiety when we turn towards the years to come, the pleasure of youth is a costly draught, in which the pearl that should enrich our manhood, is dissolved. And so much for Julia's lover; the best thing in his favour, is that she loves him. The half hour has passed—will she come? How my heart beats!—the night is clear and bright, what can have delayed her? I hear feet—Ah, Julia, is it you, indeed!

Julia took my arm, and pressed it silently; I drew aside her veil, and beneath the lamp, looked into her face; she was weeping.

“And what is the matter, dearest?”

"My sister has discovered your last letter to me; I dropped it, and—and—"

"Heavens! how could you be so imprudent—but I hope it is no matter—what does your sister say?"

"That—that I ought to see you no more."

"She is kind; but you will not obey her, my Julia?"

"I cannot help it."

"Why, surely you can come out when you like?"

"No; I have promised not. She has been a kind sister to me, sir, and—and she spoke so kindly now on this matter, that I could not help promising; and I cannot break my promise, though I may break my heart."

"Is there no way of compromising the matter?" said I, after a pause. "No way of seeing me? My Julia, you will not desert me now?"

"But what can I do?" said Julia, simply.

"My angel, surely the promise was not willingly given; it was extorted from you!"

"No, sir; I gave it with all my heart."

"I thank you."

"Pray, pray do not speak so coldly; you must, you must own it was very wrong in me ever to see you; and how could this end?—Certainly neither to my own good, nor my family's honour. I never thought much about it before, and went on, and on, till I got entangled, and did not dare look much back or much forward; but now, you see, when my sister began to show me all the folly I have committed, I was frightened, and—and, in—"

short, it is no use talking, I can meet you no more."

"But I shall at least see you at your relation's, the Miss ****?"

"No, sir; I have promised also not to go there, and not to go any where without my sister."

"Confound your sister," I muttered with a most conscientious heartiness; "you give me up then," said I, aloud, "without a sigh, and without a struggle?"

Julia wept on without answering; my heart softened to her, and my conscience smote myself. Was not the sister right? Had I not been selfishly reckless of consequences? Was it not now my duty to be generous? "And even if generous," answered Passion, "will Julia be happy! Have not matters already gone so far that her heart is implicated without recall? To leave her, is to leave her to be wretched." We walked quietly on, neither speaking. Never before had I felt how dearly I loved this innocent and charming girl; and, loving her so dearly, a feeling for *her* began to preponderate over the angry and bitter mortification I had first experienced for myself. My mind was confused and bewildered—I knew not which course to pursue. We had gone on thus mute for several minutes, when, at the corner of a street which led her homewards, Julia turned, and said in a faltering voice,—“Farewell, sir; God bless you—let us part here; I must go home now!” The street was utterly empty—the lamps few, and at long intervals, left the place where we stood in shade. I saw her countenance only imperfectly

through the low long bonnet which modestly, as it were, shrouded its tearful loveliness; I drew my arm round her, kissed her lips, and said, "Be it as you think best for yourself—go and be happy—think no more of me."

Julia paused—hesitated, as about to speak—then shook her head gently, and, still silent, (as if the voice were choked within) lowered her veil, and walked away. When she had got a few paces, she turned back, and seeing that I still stood in the same spot, gazing upon her, her courage seemed to desert her; she returned, placed her hand in mine, and said, in a soft whisper,

"You are not angry with me—you will not hate me?"

"Julia, to the last hour of my life I shall adore you; that I do not reproach you—that I do not tamper with your determination, is the greatest proof of the real and deep love I bear to you; but go—go—or I shall not be so generous long."

"Now Julia was quite a child in mind more than in years, and her impulses were childlike, and after a little pause, and a little evident embarrassment, she drew from her finger a pretty though plain ring, that I had once admired, and she said very timidly,

"If sir, you will condescend to accept this—"

I heard no more; I vow that my heart melted within me at once, and tears ran down my cheek almost as fast as they did down Julia's; the incident was simple—the sentiment it veiled was so touching and so youthful. I took the ring and kissed it—Julia yet lingered. I saw what was at her

heart, though she dared not say it. She wished also for some little remembrance of the link that had been between us, but she would not take the chain I pressed upon her; it was too costly; and the only gift that pleased her, and she at last accepted, was a ring not half the value even of her own. This little interchange, and the more gentle and less passionate feelings to which it gave birth, seemed to console her; and when she left me, it was with a steadier step and a less drooping air. Poor Julia! I staid in that desolate spot till the last glimpse of thy light form vanished from my gaze.

In the whole course of life; there is no passage in it so "weary, stale, and unprofitable," as that which follows some episode of Passion broken abruptly off. Still loving, yet forbid the object we love, the heart sinks beneath the weight of its own craving affections. There is no event to the day—a burdensome listlessness—a weary and distasteful apathy fill up the dull flatness of the hours—Time creeps before us visibly—we see his hour-glass and his scythe,—and we lose all the charm of Life the moment we are made sensible of its presence.

I resolved to travel—I fixed the day of my departure. I would that I had been permitted to carry, at least, that purpose into effect! About three days before the one I had appointed for leaving London, I met suddenly in the street my friend Anne, the eldest of the damsels to whom I had played the sorcerer. She knew, of course, of my love for Julia, and had assisted in our interviews. I found that she now knew of our separation. She called upon Julia, and the sister

had told her all, and remonstrated with her for her connivance at our attachment. The girl described the present condition of Julia in the most melancholy colours. She said she passed the day alone—and (the widow had confessed) for the most part in tears—that she had already lost her colour and roundness of form; that her health was breaking beneath an effort which her imperfect education, feeding her imagination at the expense of the reasoning faculty, and furnishing her with no resources, so ill prepared her to sustain. And with her sister, however well meaning, she had no sympathy. She found in her no support, and but seldom even companionship.

This account produced a great revulsion in my mind. Hitherto, I had at least consoled myself with the belief that I had acted in the true spirit of tenderness to Julia, and in that hope, I had supported myself. Now all thought, prudence, virtue vanished beneath the idea of her unhappiness. I returned home, and in the impulse of the moment, wrote to her a passionate, an imploring letter. I besought her to fly with me. I committed the letter to my servant, a foreigner, well used to such commissions; and, in a state of breathless fever, I awaited the reply. It came—the address was in Julia's writing, I opened it with a sort of transport—my own letter was returned unopened—the cover contained these few words:—

“I have pledged myself to return your letters in case you should write to me, and so I keep my word. I dare not—dare not open this; for I cannot tell you what it costs me to keep my resolu-

tion. I had no idea that it would be so impossible to forget you—that I should be so unhappy. But though I will not trust myself to read what you have written, I know well how full of kindness every word is, and feel as if I *had* read the letter; and it makes me wickedly happy to think you have not *yet* forgotten me, though you soon must. Pray do not write to me again—I beseech you not, as you value the little peace that is left to me. And so, sir, no more from Julia, who prays for you night and day, and will think of you as long as she lives.”

What was I to do after the receipt of this letter? So artless was Julia, that every word that ought to have dissuaded me from molesting her more, seemed to make it impossible to refrain. And what a corroboration in these lines of all I had been told! I waited till dark. I repaired with my servant to that part of the town in which Julia’s sister resided. I reconnoitred the house. “And how,” asked I, for the first time of my servant, “how, Louis, did you convey the letter?”

“I went, sir, first,” answered Louis, “to the young lady, Miss Julia’s cousin, in —— street, and asked if I could not carry any parcel to her relation. She understood me, and gave me one. I slipped the letter into the parcel, and calling at the private entrance of the house desired the maid who opened the door to give it only to Miss Julia, I made sure of the servant with half a guinea. Miss Julia herself came down, and gave me the answer.”

“Ha, and you saw her then?”

“Not her face, sir, for she had put on her bonnet, and she did not detain me a moment.”

In this account, there was no clew to the apartment which belonged to Julia, and that was now my main object to discover. I trusted, however, greatly to the ingenuity and wit of my confidant, and a little to my own. It was a corner house—large, rambling, old-fashioned; one side of the house ran down a dark and narrow street, the other faced a broad and public thoroughfare. In walking to and fro the former street, I at length saw a sudden light in a window of the second floor, and Julia herself—yes, herself! appeared for one moment at the window. I recognised her gentle profile—her parted hair—and then she drew down the curtain; all was darkness and a blank. That, then, was her apartment; at least, I had some right to conjecture so. How to gain it was still the question. Rope-ladders exist only in romances; besides, the policemen and the passengers. The maid-servant flashed across me—might she not, bought over to the minor indulgence, be purchased also to the greater one? I called my servant, and bade him attempt the task. After a little deliberation, he rang the bell—luck favoured me—the same servant as before answered the summons. I remained at a distance, shrouded in my cloak.

At length the door closed—Louis joined me—the servant had consented to admit me two hours hence; I might then see Julia undetected. The girl, according to Louis, was more won over by compassion for Julia's distress, whom she imagined *compelled* by her sister to reject the ad-

dresses of a true lover, than even by the bribe. In two hours the sister would have retired to rest—the house would be still! Oh, Heaven! what a variety of burning emotions worked upon me—and stifled remorse, nay, even fear. Lest we should attract observation, by lingering for so long a time about the spot, I retired from the place at present. I returned at the appointed hour. I was admitted—all was dark—the servant, who was a very young girl herself, conducted me up the narrow stairs. We came to Julia's door—a light broke through the chinks and under the threshold; and now, for the first time, I faltered, I trembled, the colour fled my cheeks, my knees knocked together. By a violent effort I conquered my emotion. What was to be done? If I entered without premeditation, Julia, in her sudden alarm, might rouse the house; if I sent in the servant to acknowledge that I was there, she might yet refuse to see me—No! this one interview I would insist upon! This latter course was the best, the only one. I bade the girl then prepare her young mistress for my presence. She entered, and shut the door; I sat down at the threshold. Conceive all I felt as I sat there, listening to the loud beating of my own heart! The girl did not come out—time passed—I heard Julia's voice within, and there seemed fear, agony, in its tone. I could wait no more. I opened her door gently, and stood before her. The fire burnt low and clear in the grate—one candle assisted its partial light; there was a visible air of purity—of maidenhood about the whole apartment that struck an instant reverence into my

heart. Books in small shelves hung upon the wall; Julia's work lay upon a table, near the fire; the bed stood at a little distance with its white, simple drapery;—in all was that quiet and spotless neatness which is as a type of the inmate's mind. My eye took the whole scene at a glance. And Julia herself—reclined on a chair—her head buried in her hands—sobbing violently—and the maid pale and terrified before her, having lost all presence of mind, all attempt to cheer her mistress, much less to persuade! I threw myself at Julia's feet, and attempted to seize her hand; she started up, with a faint cry of terror.

"You!" she said, with keen reproach. "I did not expect this from you! Go—go! What would you have? What could you think of me—at this hour—in this room?"—and as she said the last words, she again hid her face with her hands, but only for a moment. "Go!" she exclaimed, in a sterner voice. "Go instantly, or—"

"Or what, Julia! You will raise the house? Do so? In the face of all—foes or friends—I will demand the right to see and speak with you—this night, and alone. Now summon the house. In the name of indomitable love I swear that I will be heard."

Julia only waved her hand in yet stronger agitation than before.

"What do you fear?" I resumed, in a softer whisper. "Is it *I*? *I* who, for your sake, gave up even the attempt to see you till now. And *now*, what brings me hither? A selfish purpose? No! it is for *your* happiness that I come. Julia, I

fancied you well—at ease—forgetting me; and I bore my own wretchedness without a murmur. I heard of you ill, pining—living only on the past; I forgot all prudence, and I am here. Now, do you blame, or do you yet imagine that this love is of a nature which you have cause to fear? Answer me, Julia!”

“I cannot—I cannot—here!—and now—go, I implore you, and to-morrow I will see you.”

“This night, or never,” said I, rising and folding my arms.

Julia turned round, gazing on my face with so anxious, so inquiring, so alarmed a look, that it checked my growing courage; then turning to the servant, she grasped her firmly by the arm, and muttered, “*You will not leave me?*”

“Julia, have I deserved this? Be yourself, and be just to me.”

“Not here, I say; not here,” cried Julia, in so vehement a tone, that I feared it might alarm the house.

“Hush, hush! Well, then,” said I, “come down stairs; doubtless the sitting room below is vacant enough; there, then, let me see you only for a few minutes, and I will leave you contented, and blessing your name.”

“I will,” said Julia, gaspingly. “Go, I will follow you.”

“Promise!”

“Yes, yes; I promise!”

“Enough; I am satisfied.”

Once more I descended the stairs, and sat myself quietly on the last step. I did not wait many

moments. Shading the light with her hand, Julia stole down, and opened a door in the passage. We were in a little parlour,—the gaping servant was about also to enter. I whispered her to stay without. Julia did not seem to observe or to heed this. Perhaps in this apartment—connected with all the associations of daylight and safety—she felt herself secure. She appeared, too, to look round the little room with a satisfied air, and her face, though very pale, had lost its aspect of fear.

The room was cold, and looked desolate enough, heaven knows;—the furniture all disarranged and scattered, the tables strewed with litter, the rug turned up, the ashes in the grate. But Julia here suffered me to take her hand,—and Julia here leant upon my bosom, and I kissed away the tears from her eyes, and she confessed she had been very, very unhappy.

Then, with all the power that Love gives us over the one beloved—that soft despotism which melts away the will—I urged my suite to Julia, and implored her to let us become the world to each other. And Julia had yet the virtue to refuse, and her frank simplicity had already half restored my own better angel to myself, when I heard a slight alarmed scream from the servant without—an angry voice—the door opened;—I saw a female whom I was at no loss to conjecture must be Julia's sister. What a picture it made! The good lady with her *bonnet de nuit*, and, her—but, alas! the story is too serious for jest; yet imagine how the small things of life interfere with its great events: the widow had come down to look for her keys

that she had left behind. The pathetic—the passionate—all marred by a bunch of keys. She looked hard at me before she even deigned to regard my companion; and then approaching us, she took Julia roughly enough by the arm.

“Go up stairs, go!” said she. “How have you deceived me. And you, sir, what do you here? Who are you?”

“My dear lady, take a chair, and let us have some rational conversation.”

“Sir, do you mean to insult me?”

“How can you imagine I do?”

Leave the house this instant, or I shall order in the Policeman!”

“Not you!”

“How!—will I not?”

Julia, glad of an escape, had already glided from the room.

“Madam,” said I, “listen to me, I will not leave this apartment until I have exonerated your sister from all blame in this interview. I entered the house unknown to her: I went at once to her own room—you start; it was so; I speak the truth. I insisted on speaking to her, as I insist on speaking to you now; and if you will not hear me, know the result; it is this—I will visit this house, guard it as you can:—day and night I will visit it, until it hold Julia no more,—until she is mine! Is this the language of a man whom you can control? Come, be seated, and hear me.”

The mistress of the house mechanically took a chair. We conversed together for more than an

hour. And I found that Julia had been courted the year before by a man in excellent circumstances, of her own age, and her own station in life; that she had once appeared disposed to favour his suit, and that, since she had known me, she had rejected it. The sister was very anxious she should not accept it. She appealed to me whether I should persevere in a suit that could not end honourably to Julia—to the exclusion of one that would secure to her affluence, respectability, a station, and a home. I was struck by this appeal. The widow was, like most of her class, a shrewd and worldly woman enough: she followed up the advantage she had gained; and, at length, imboldened by my silence, and depending greatly on my evident passion for Julia, she threw out a pretty broad hint that the only way to finish the dispute fairly was to marry Julia myself. Now, if there be any propensity common to a sensible man of the world, it is suspicion. I immediately suspected that I was to be “*taken in!*” Could Julia connive at this? Had her reserve so great, yet her love so acknowledged, been lures to fascinate me into the snare? I did not yield to the suspicion, but, somehow or other, it remained half unconsciously on my mind. So great was my love for Julia, that, had it been less *suddenly* formed, I might have sacrificed all, and married her; but, in sudden passions, there is *no esteem*. You are ashamed, you are afraid of indulging them to their full extent;—you feel that as yet you are the dupe, if not of others, at least of your own senses,

and the very knowledge of the excess of your passion puts you on your guard lest you should be betrayed by it. I said nothing in answer to the widow's suggestion, but I suffered her to suppose from my manner, that it *might* have its effect. I left the house after an amicable compromise. On my part I engaged not to address Julia herself any more. On the widow's part, she promised, that, on applying to *her*, she would suffer me at any time to see Julia, even alone.

For the next two days, I held a sharp contest with myself. Could I, with love still burning in every vein, consent to renounce Julia? Yet could I consent to deprive her of the holy and respected station she had it in her power to hold, to pursue my suit, to accomplish its purpose in her degradation? A third choice was left me: should I obey the sister's hint, and proffer marriage?—Marriage with one beautiful, indeed, simple, amiable, but without birth, education; without sympathy with myself in a single thought or habit? be the fool of my own desire, and purchase what I had the sense to feel must be a discontented and ill-mated life, for the mere worship of external qualities? Yet, yet,—in a word, I felt as if I could arrive at no decision for myself. I remembered an old friend and adviser of my youth,—to him, then, I resolved to apply for counsel.

John Mannering is about sixty years of age; he is of a mild temper, of great experience, of kindly manners, and of a morality which professes to be practicable rather than strict. He had guided

me from many errors in the earlier part of my life, but he had impressed no clear principle on my mind in order to guide myself. His own virtue was without system, the result of a good heart, though not an ardent one; and a mind which did not aspire beyond a certain elevation,—not from the want of a clear sense, but of enthusiasm.—Such as he was, he was the best adviser I knew of; for he was among the few who can sympathize with your feelings as well as your interests. With him I conversed long and freely. His advice was obvious—to renounce Julia. I went home, I reasoned with myself; I sat down and began twenty letters; I tore them all in a rage. I could not help picturing to my mind Julia pining and in despair; and in affecting to myself to feel only for her, I compassionated my own situation. At length Love prevailed over all. I resolved to call on the widow, to request permission to be allowed to visit Julia at her house, and, without promising marriage, still to pay her honourable courtship, with a view of ascertaining if our tempers and dispositions were as congenial as our hearts. *I fancied such a proposition seemed exceedingly reasonable and common sense like.* I shut my eyes to the consequences, and knowing how malleable is the nature of woman in youth, I pleased myself with that notion which has deceived so many visionaries, that I should be able to perfect her education, and that, after a few years' travel on the continent, I might feel as proud of her mind as I was now transported with her person. Meanwhile,

now tempting was the compromise with my feelings!—I should see her—converse with her!—live in the atmosphere of her presence!

The next day I called on the sister; whose dark, hrewd eye sparkled at my proposition. All was arranged! I saw Julia! What delight beamed in her face! With what smiles and tears she hrew herself in my arms! I was satisfied and happy.

And now I called every day, and every day saw Julia: but after the first interview, the charm was broken! I saw with new eyes! The sister, commercial to the back-bone of her soul, was delighted, indeed at the thought of the step in life her sister was to make. Julia was evidently impressed by the widow's joy and visions of splendour evidently mingled with those of love. What more natural? Love, perhaps, predominated over all; but was it possible that, in a young and imaginative mind, the worldly vanities should be wholly dormant? Yet it was natural, also, that my suspicion should be roused,—that I should fear I was deceived,—that I might have been designedly led on to this step,—that what had seemed nature in Julia was in reality art!

I looked in her face and its sunny and beautiful candour reassured me—but the moment afterwards the thought forced itself upon me again—I recalled also the instances I had ever known of unequal marriages, and I fancied I saw unhappiness in all—it seemed to me, in all, that the superior had been palpably duped. Thus a coldness insensibly

crept over the wonted ardour of my manner, and instead of that blessed thoughtlessness, that Elysian credulity, with which lovers should give themselves up to the transport of the hour, and imagine that each is the centre of all perfection, I became restless and vigilant—for ever sifting motives, and diving deeper than the sweet surface of the present time. My mind thus influenced—the delusion that conceals all faults and uncongenialities gradually evaporated—I noted a thousand things in Julia that made me start at the notion of seeing her become my wife. So long as marriage had not entered into my views—so long those faults had not touched me—had passed unheeded;—I saw her now with other eyes. When I sought in her love and beauty alone I was contented to ask no more. At present I sought more; she was to become the companion of a life, and I was alarmed, nay, I even exaggerated the petty causes of my displeasure; an inelegance of expression—a negligence of conventional forms—fretted and irritated me in her far more than they would have done in one of my own station.

When love first becomes reasonable, it soon afterwards grows unjust. I did not scruple to communicate to Julia all the little occurrences of the day, or little points in her manner, that had annoyed me; and I found that she did not take my suggestions, mild and guarded as they were, in a manner I thought I had a right to expect. She had been accustomed to see me enamoured of her lightest word or gesture—she was not prepared

to find me now cavilling and reproving; her face, always ingenuous, evinced at once her mortification at the change. She thought me always in the wrong, wearisome, exacting, and unjust. She never openly resented at first, merely pouted out her pretty lip and was silent for the next half hour; but, by degrees, my beautiful Julia began to evince traces of a "spirit"—a spirit not, indeed, unfeminine, and never loud—a spirit of sorrow rather than anger: I was ungenerous (she said)—I had never found these faults before—I had never required all this perfection—and then she wept;—and that went to my heart; and I was not satisfied with myself till she smiled again. But it was easy to perceive that from taking pleasure in each other's society we grew by degrees to find embarrassment;—the fear of a quarrel, discontent, and a certain pain supplying the place of eager and all absorbing rapture; and when I looked to the future, I trembled. In a word—I repeat once more—" *The charm was gone!*"

Oh, epoch in the history of human passions! when that phrase is spoken, what volumes does it not convey!—what bitter, what irremediable disappointment!—what dread conviction of the fallacy of hope and the false colouring of imagination!—what a chill and dark transition—from life as we fancied it, to life as it is!—In the Arabian tale, when one eye was touched with the mystic ointment, all the treasures of the earth became visible, and the sterile rock was transformed into mines of inexhaustible wealth; but when the same

spell is extended to both eyes the delusion vanishes—the earth relapses into its ancient barrenness—and the mine fades once more into the desert;—so in the experience of the passions—while we are as yet but partially the creatures of the enchantment, we are blessed with a power to discover glory in all things,—we are as magicians—we are as gods!—we are not contented—we demand more—custom touches *both* eyes—and, lo! the vision is departed, and we are alone in the wilderness again!

One evening after one of our usual quarrels and reconciliations, Julia's spirits seemed raised into more than usual reaction. There were three or four of her friends present—a sort of party—her cousins (the fortune seekers) among the rest—and she was the life of the circle. In proportion to her gaiety was my discontent; I fancied she combined with the widow, who evidently wanted to “show me off,” in her own damnable phrase, as her sister's wooer: and this is a position in which no tolerably fastidious man likes to be placed: add to this, my readers very well know that people who have no inelegance when subdued, throw off a thousand little *grossièrities* when they are elated. No ordeal is harder for a young and lovely woman, who has not been brought up *conventionally*, to pass with grace, than that of her own unrestrained merriment. Levity requires polish in proportion to your interest in the person who indulges it; and levity in his mistress is almost always displeasing to a passionate lover. Love is so very grave and so very refined a deity. In short, every

instant added to my secret vexation. I absolutely coloured with rage at every jest bandied between poor Julia and her companions. I swear I think I could have beat her, with a safe conscience. The party went; now came my turn. I remonstrated—Julia replied—we both lost our temper. I fancied then I was entirely in the right; but now, alas! I will believe myself wrong: it is some sacrifice to a dread memory to own it.

“You always repine at my happiness,” said Julia; “to be merry is always in your eyes a crime; I cannot bear this tyranny; I am not your wife, and if I were I would not bear it. If I displease you now, what shall I do hereafter?”

“But, my dear Julia, you can so easily avoid the little peculiarities I dislike. Believe me unreasonable—perhaps I am so. It is some pleasure to a generous mind to sacrifice to the unreasonableness of one we love. In a word, I own it frankly, if you meet all my wishes with this obstinacy, we cannot be happy, and——and——”

“I see,” interrupted Julia, with unwonted vehemence, “I see what you would say; you are tired of me; you feel that I do not suit your ideal notions.—You thought me all perfect when you designed me for your victim; but now, that you think something is to be sacrificed on *your* part, you think only of that paltry sacrifice, and demand of me an impossible perfection in return!”

There was so much truth in this reproach that it stung me to the quick. It was indelicate, perhaps, in Julia to use it—it was certainly unwise.

I turned pale with anger.

"Madam," I began, with that courtesy which conveys all reproach,

"Madam!" repeated Julia, turning suddenly round—her lips parted—her eyes flashing through her tears—alarm—grief—but also indignation quivering in every muscle.—"Is it come to this?—Go!—Let us part—my love ceases since I see yours is over! Were you twice as wealthy—twice as proud—I would not humble myself to be beholden to your justice instead of your affection—rather—rather—oh God!—rather would I have sacrificed myself—given up all to you—than accept one advantage from the man who considers it an honour. Let us part."

Julia had evidently conceived the word I had used in cold and bitter respect, as an irony on her station as well as a proof of coldness; but I did not stop to consider whether or not she was reasonably provoked; her disdain for the sacrifice I thought so great galled me—the violence of her passion revolted. I thought only of the escape she offered me—"Let us part"—rang in my ear like a reprieve to a convict. I rose at once—took my hat calmly—and not till I reached the door did I reply,

"Enough, Julia—we part for ever. You will hear from me to-morrow for the last time."

I left the house and trod as on air. My love for Julia, long decreasing, seemed crushed at once. I imagined her former gentleness all hypocrisy;—I thought only of the termagant I had escaped. I

congratulated myself that she having broken the chain I was free and with honour. I did not then—no—nor till it was too late—recall the despair printed on her hueless face, when the calm low voice of my resolution broke upon her ear, and she saw that she had indeed lost me for ever. That image rises before me now; it will haunt me to my grave. Her features pale and locked—the pride, the resentment, all sunk,—merged in one incredulous, wild stony aspect of deserted love. Alas!—alas!—could I have believed that she felt so deeply! I wrote to her the next day kindly and temperately, but such a tone made the wound deeper—I bade her farewell for ever. To her sister I wrote more fully. I said that our tempers were so thoroughly unsuited, that no rational hope of happiness in our union could exist for either. I besought her not to persuade or induce her sister to marry the suitor who had formerly addressed her, unless she could return his affection. Whomsoever she married her fortune should be my care. Doubtless in a little time some one would be to her as dear as I once had fancied myself to be. “Let,” I said, “no disparity in fortune, then, be an obstacle on either side; I will cheerfully give up half my own to redeem whatever affliction I may have occasioned her.” With this letter I entirely satisfied my conscience.

It is almost incredible to think in how short a time the whole of these events had been crowded—within how few weeks I had concentrated the whole history of Love!—its first mysterious sen-

timent—its ardent passion—its dissension—its coolness—its breach—its everlasting farewell!

In four days I received a letter from Julia's sister—(none from Julia.) It was written in a tone of pert and flippant insolence, which made me more than ever reconciled to the turn of events; but it contained one piece of news I did not hear with indifference,—Julia had accepted the offer of her former suitor, and was to be married next week. "She bids me say," wrote the widow, "that she sees at once through your pretence, under an affected wish for her happiness, to prevent her forming this respectable connexion;—she sees that you still assume the right to dictate to her, and that your offers of generosity are merely the condescensions of a fancied superiority;—she assures you, however, that your wish for her happiness is already realized."

This undeserved and insulting message completed my conquest over any lurking remorse or regret; and I did not, in my resentment at Julia's injustice, perceive how much it was the operation of a wounded vanity upon a despairing heart.

I still lingered in town; and, some days afterwards, I went to dine in the neighbourhood of Westminster, at the house of one of the most jovial of boon companions. I had for some weeks avoided society: the temporary cessation gave a new edge to my zest for its pleasures. The hours flew rapidly,—my spirits rose,—and I enjoyed the present with a gust that had been long denied to me.

On leaving the house on foot, the fineness of the night, with its frosty air and clear stars, tempted me to turn from my direct way homeward, and I wandered, mechanically, towards a scene which has always possessed to me, at night, a great attraction, viz., the bridge which divides the suburb from the very focus of the capital, with its proud abbey and gloomy Senate! I walked to and fro the bridge,—gazing at times on the dark waters, reflecting the lights from the half-seen houses and the stars of the solemn heavens. My mind was filled with shadowy and vague presentiments: I felt awed and saddened, without a palpable cause; the late excitement of my spirits was succeeded by a melancholy reaction. I mused over the various disappointments of my life, and the Ixion-like delusion with which I had so often wooed a deity and clasped a cloud. My history with Julia made a principal part of these meditations; her image returned to me irresistibly, and with renewed charms. In vain I endeavoured to recur to the feelings of self-acquittal and gratulation, which a few hours ago had actuated me; my heart was softened, and my memory refused to recall all harsher retrospection—her love—her innocence, only obtruded themselves upon me, and I sighed to think that, perhaps, by this time she was irrevocably another. I retraced my steps, and was now at the end of the bridge, when, just by the stairs, I perceived a crowd, and heard a vague and gathering clamour. A secret impulse hurried me to the place. I heard a policeman speaking with

the eagerness which characterizes the excitement of narration.

"My suspicions were aroused," quoth he, "as I passed, and saw a female standing by the bridge. So, you see, I kept loitering there, and a minute after I went gently up, and I heard the young woman groan; and she turned round as I came up, for I frightened her; and I never shall forget her face,—it was so wo-begone,—and yet she was so young and handsome. And so, you see, I spoke to her, and I said, says I, 'Young woman, what do you do here at this hour?' And she said, 'I am waiting for a boat; I expect my mother from Richmond.' 'And somehow or other I was foolish enough to believe what she said—she looked so quiet and respectable like; and I went away, you understand; and in about a minute after (for I kept near the spot) I heard a heavy splash in the water, and then I knew what it all was. I ran up, and I just saw her once rise; and so as I could not swim, I gave the alarm, and we got the boat—but it was too late."

"Poor girl!" lisped an old coster woman; "I dare say she was crossed in love."

"What is this?" said I, mixing with the crowd.

"A young woman as has drowned herself, sir."

"Where? I do not see the body."

"It be taken to the watch house, and the doctors are trying to recover it."

A horrible idea had crossed my mind;—unfounded, improbable as it seemed, I felt as if compelled to confirm or remove it. I made the po-

liceman go with me to the watch house ;—I pushed away the crowd—I approached the body. Oh, God, that white face—the heavy dripping hair—the swollen form—and all that decent and maiden beauty, with the coarse cover half thrown over it!—and the unsympathizing surgeons standing by! and the unfamiliar faces of the women! What a scene! what a death bed! Julia, Julia! thou art avenged!

It was her, then, whom I beheld; her—the victim, the self-destroyer. I hurry over the awful record. I am writing my own condemnation—stamping my own curse. They found upon the corpse a letter: drenched as it was, I yet could decipher its characters; it was to me. It ran thus:

“I believe now that I have been much to blame, for I am writing calmly, with a fixed determination not to live; and I see how much I have thrown away the love you once gave me. Yet I have loved you always,—how dearly, I never told you, and never can tell! But when you seemed to think so much of your—what shall I say?—your condescension in marrying, perhaps, loving me, it maddened me to the brain; and, though I would have given worlds to please you, I could not bear to see the difference in your manner, after you came to see me daily, and to think of me as a woman ought to be thought of; and this, I know, made me seem cross, and peevish, and unamiable,—but I could not help it,—and so you ceased to love me; and I felt that, and longed, madly, to release you from

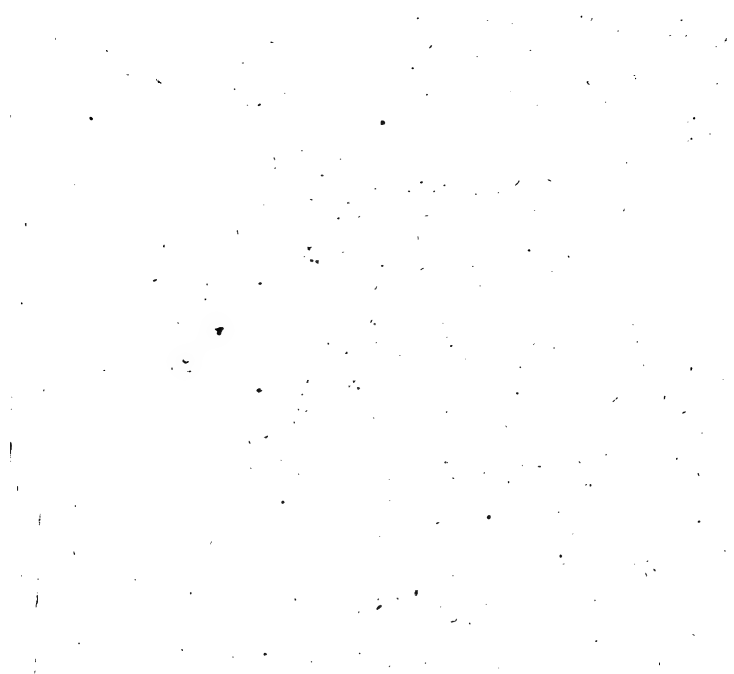
a tie you repented. The moment came for me to do so, and—we parted. Then you wrote to me, and my sister made me see in the letter what, perhaps, you did not intend; but, indeed, I was only sensible to the thought that I had lost you for ever, and that you scorned me. And then my vanity was roused,—and I knew you still loved me,—and I fancied I could revenge myself upon you by marrying another. But when I came to see, and meet, and smile upon that other,—and to feel the day approach,—and to reflect that *you* had been all in all to me,—and that I was about to pass my whole life with one I loathed, after having loved so well and so entirely,—I felt I had reckoned too much on my own strength, and that I could not sustain my courage any longer. Nothing is left to me in life; the anguish I suffer is intolerable; and I have, at length, made up my mind to die. But think not I am a poor love-sick girl only. I am more;—I am still a revengeful woman. You have deserted me, and I know myself to blame; but I cannot bear that you should forget and despise me, as you would if I were to marry. I am about to force you to remember me for ever,—to be sorry for me,—to forgive me,—to love me better than you have done yet, even when you loved me most. It is in this that I shall be revenged!”

And with this wild turmoil of contending feelings—the pride of womanhood wrestling with the softness—forgiveness with revenge—high emotions with erring principles—agony, led on to death by one hope to be remembered and deplored;—with

this contest at thy heart didst thou go down to thy watery grave!

What must have passed within thee in those brief and terrible moments, when thou stoodest by the dark waters—hesitating—lingering—fearing—yet resolved! And I was near thee in that hour, and knew thee not—at hand, and saved not! Oh! bitter was the revenge—lasting is the remembrance! Henceforth, I ask no more of Human Affections: I stand alone on the Earth!

THE END.



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